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AUTHOR	Berkowitz, JoAnn M.; Uline, Cynthia L.
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ABSTRACT

This book is part of a series of case studies that demonstrate better ways to educate Ohio's students. The case study is part of the Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project, designed to support significant school-reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. This report describes the implementation of an innovative program at a middle school in north-central Ohio. It is based on a 9-month study that included observations, analysis of documents, and interviews of faculty, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders. Some of the questions researchers asked about the program included: "What are the structures, strategies, and support networks that have developed to encourage change?" and "What is the nature of the learning community at the high school?" The text provides a history of the school and then details the team approach that was incorporated into the school. It describes the historical, organizational, developmental, and political dimensions of teaming, and the dilemmas that stakeholders faced in implementing the team approach. It discusses the changing student culture in the classroom and the transformation of relationships. The text outlines the value in extending a new school culture beyond school walls and presents strategies for connecting reforms in the school corridors with practices in the classrooms. The appendix describes the project methodology. (Contains 38 references.) (RJM)

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A Changing School Culture

The Case Study of Galion Middle School

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Susan Tave Zelman, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Nancy Eberhart, Ph.D.
Interim Chief Program Officer

Professional Development and Licensure
Marilyn Troyer, Ph.D.
Interim Director

Linda Nusbaum, Ph.D.
Research Project Manager

Document Management Services
Sue Fiedler
Typesetter
Lynn Brown-Van Sickle
Graphic Artist

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Dennis Thiessen, Ph.D.
Stephen Anderson, Ph.D.
Co-Directors of Transforming Learning Communities Project

Assisted by
Shawn Moore, Research Officer
Anastasia Meletopoulos, Research Assistant

TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

A CHANGING SCHOOL CULTURE:

THE CASE STUDY OF GALION MIDDLE SCHOOL

Prepared by:

JoAnn M. Berkowitz, Graduate Research Assistant
Cynthia L. Uline, Ph.D., Assistant Professor
The Ohio State University

in cooperation with

Andrew Johnson, Galion Middle School Principal
Pamela Swert, Former Galion Middle School Principal
Tim Miller, Galion Middle School Teacher
Darrell Lemke, Galion Middle School Teacher

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Ohio Department of Education

Columbus, Ohio

1999

Dear Readers:

The 12 Transforming Learning Communities case studies enlighten readers about the search for better ways to educate Ohio's young people. The stories, told by educators themselves, paint a realistic picture of schools in Ohio.

The unique and inspirational perspectives of the school people highlight the triumphs of team spirit, the drive to turn obstacles into opportunities, and the effort to consider complex questions and find answers that lead to higher student achievement. These researchers tell stories of success and frustration in the endeavor to make life better for future generations.

At the core of educational change is a long-term commitment to teaching and learning that has the potential for creating positive change throughout society. The case studies emphasize intense, high-quality professional development; increased service to others; a holistic approach to education; the promotion of a sense of community; and a deepened understanding of the daily work in the classrooms, corridors, and boardrooms of public schools.

The educators at the heart of change encourage us to examine and refresh our views about schools. Sincere thanks is extended to the local educators, university researchers, and concerned citizens for their willingness to examine the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of change.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Nusbaum

Linda C. Nusbaum
Research Project Manager

Transforming Learning Communities Project

INTRODUCTION

The Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project was an initiative funded by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to support significant school reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. Education researchers associated with the International Centre for Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto were contracted to undertake in-depth case studies of school improvement in a select number of schools supported by Ohio's Venture Capital grants. The aim was to understand the school improvement efforts in these schools, and to engage other Ohio educators in the lessons learned from these schools' experiences.

The project title communicates the orientation to the study. "Learning communities" is a metaphor for schools as learning places for everyone (especially students and teachers) who has a stake in the success of schools as educational environments. "Transforming" signifies that the schools are in a process of change, and that the changes they are striving to achieve involve fundamental reforms in teaching and learning, assessment, organization, professional development, and/or governance. Transforming also captures the intent of the project to support — not just to document — the process of change in participating schools.

The TLC Project began in the Spring of 1997. A three-stage process was used to identify and select schools that had demonstrated notable progress in their efforts to implement significant change over the preceding three to five years: (1) solicitation of nominations from ODE staff familiar with the Venture Capital schools, corroborating opinions from independent sources (e.g., Regional Professional Development Center staff), and statistical profiles for nominated schools (e.g., performance and demographic data); (2) telephone interviews with the principal of each nominated school; and (3) ranking of schools according to relevant sampling criteria. Twelve schools were chosen for variation in type (elementary, middle, secondary); location (rural, urban, and suburban from various regions in Ohio); focus for change (e.g., teaching and learning, professional growth, school-community partnerships); school improvement model; and evidence of progress.

The individual case studies were carried out during the 1997/98 school year by teams consisting of at least two members of the school staff and researchers from four Ohio universities that partnered with the schools. Each team designed and implemented a multi-method study of school improvement activities and outcomes in their school learning community. These included interviews, observations, surveys, and documents. While each case study reflected the unique character of school change at each school, the studies employed a common conceptual framework to guide their exploration and analysis of change in these school learning communities. The TLC framework oriented the case study teams to investigate change and change processes in multiple contexts — the classroom, the corridors, and the community — and in relation to three key processes of learning in organizations: collaboration, inquiry, and integration.

The major products of the Transforming Learning Communities Project include 12 individual case study monographs, a cross-case study and handbook, and a companion video at www.ode.ohio.gov.

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Chapter One

Introducing Galion Middle School

This case study tells the story of change at Galion Middle School. For more than a decade, administration, faculty, and staff have engaged in ongoing efforts to transform the structure and the culture of their school. Much of the work has been informed by ongoing inquiry about teaching students in the middle of their school career. These early adolescents are transitioning from self-contained elementary school classrooms, where their school day and work are more continuous, and where their teachers are more apt to consider these daily learning activities within the larger context of childhood life experiences. At the same time, these students are living out profound changes within themselves: physical, social and emotional developments that can be confusing and, at times, daunting.

Faculty and staff at Galion Middle School agree that school should be a place that helps, not hinders, during this critical developmental period. Thus, they have attempted to move the school away from the design of a traditional junior high school, conceived of as a training ground for the more compartmentalized, subject-focused experiences of high school, and transform it into a middle school, where academic experiences are dynamic, academic content areas are connected, and teachers concern themselves with educating youth rather than teaching subject matter. The goal has been to make school a place where students want to be. Galion teachers work to realize the social, as well as the academic, potential of school on behalf of these students in the *middle*.

This story is about changing school rhythms and ways of being. The participants within Galion's reform efforts have modified institutional regularities and conventions in order to provide ample time and space for students and teachers to work together. They have adopted new methods for planning, scheduling, monitoring, assessing, and classifying. They have introduced new rules and roles, challenging themselves to question routines which had been taken for granted as the way junior high schools do business. These routines and conventions for structuring the school day, defining teacher work, and organizing and presenting curricular content are deeply embedded in the culture of a school. They are difficult to see and to see through, and determining who makes decisions about when and how they should change only confounds the task.

Galion teachers and administrators have learned that such efforts take time and result in organizational, developmental, and political dynamics, some of which encourage growth and progress, others of which impede the enterprise. The story which follows describes these experiences as they have unfolded at Galion Middle School. Throughout, these educators describe themselves as always learning. They define their actions as organic. Sometimes changes have happened slowly and quietly; other times boldly and vigorously. Always, their collective experiences seem to teach them things as they are careful to watch and listen, remember and imagine.

Galion Middle School in Context

Galion Middle School is located in the city of Galion in Crawford County approximately 48 miles north of Columbus. Galion city covers an area of five square miles with a population of nearly twelve thousand people. A steady decline in local business and industry has resulted in a tenuous economic climate which has had its impact on the local schools. The district's per-pupil expenditure of $4,392 falls below the $4,890 level experienced by similar Ohio school districts. Physical facilities show their age, and technology and other improvements are introduced slowly, many times as a result of teacher initiative. The middle school has relied largely upon outside funding to support change initiatives including the Effective Schools Grant, Ohio Technology Equity Grant, Venture Capital Grants, and the Ohio Educational Broadcasting Grant.

The school district comprises four elementary schools, the middle school and one high school. According to data supplied by the Ohio Department of Education for 1996, 1.4 percent of the student population is African-American and Hispanic, with an average school district income of $20,750. These schools are spared the perplexities which come with widely diverse or profoundly needy communities. For the most part, Galion schools remain safe and friendly places. Yet, even in these more homogenized and placid schools, educators and students face economic as well as social pressures and challenges. Many of the changes at Galion Middle School have attempted to address these social realities, always attempting to make the most of what they have available to them.

The middle school is attended by seventh-grade and eighth-grade students, as well as accelerated sixth graders who join the middle school one year earlier than the rest of their grade-level cohort. They are divided into three academic core teams, one of which includes sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students, one of only seventh-grade students and one of eighth-grade students. Each team is composed of approximately 150 students, and is taught by a team of six teachers.

Over time, teachers were empowered to decide how they would organize themselves and the student body. Opportunities to debate, discuss and persuade were essential to these decisions. Teachers learned how to redirect solitary action toward cooperative inquiry. They learned how to converse and

contribute ideas, to discuss and debate opposing points of view, and to work through problems, cooperating with one another as they went. Practicing these habits pushed individuals to sharpen their own ideas and to consider carefully the thoughts of others. It opened space where shared interests were clarified and common purposes emerged.

Participants took advantage of the 1970-vintage structural renovations to the school which created multi-classroom, open-space suites. These became the physical sites for teaming. They also capitalized on curricular innovations of the same era which resulted in the cross-aged, accelerated program for academically advanced students, the Most Advantageous Alternative Program (MAAP). This program eventually served as a model for the development of the other grade-level teams.

Throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the school sought the support of local school and university partnerships. They looked to learn what they could from the experts and from the experiences of other small and middle schools. During this time, the faculty, in cooperation with the administration, restructured the daily schedule, creating blocks of time that could be team-managed and creating common planning times for teaching teams to meet each day. Teachers began to experiment with integrating the curriculum. They created in-team, thematic learning projects and units of study, as well as school-wide instructional experiences. From a unit on Galion history to study of the Holocaust, from a mock political convention to a day of creating along side Ohio artists, from experiencing the cultures of the world to studying potential careers, teachers began to craft continuous activities, all of which have social, as well as academic, intent. "[U]nder such conditions, the school becomes itself a form of social life, a miniature community and one in close association with other modes of associated experience beyond school walls" (Dewey, 1916, p. 418).

Students began to see the events of each school day as consequential. Along with their teachers, they began to learn in active cooperation with one another. Teams began to create significant histories and identities. They accumulated common stores of experiences, routines, and norms. What happened in these early stages of change affected all that has continued to come after. This story is told taking this developing history carefully into account.

The Facts of the Case

What follows is the story of Galion Middle School told largely by the participants in these reforms. The story they tell is complex and multidimensional. It chronicles activity across many fronts. Participants describe changes in the *corridors* of the school: changes in the ways people and time are organized and managed, in the ways adults work and work together, and in the ways people interact with one another and make decisions. They describe changes in the *classroom:* changes in the relationships between adults and children, in the interactions between and among the students themselves, and in the

school work itself. Their story reaches outside the school into the *community* and beyond, revealing the resources, the supports and the constraints which present themselves through these outside influences, influences which at times assisted and other times impeded the changes at Galion.

Changing school culture is no small task. Schein (1985) defines culture as a set of implicit and silent assumptions which cannot change unless they are first brought to the surface and confronted. Hannay and Ross (1997) suggest that changing school cultures involves adapting long-standing norms. These norms influence behavior at all levels of school activity. They are the rules for how individuals interact, how priorities are established, even for what is "deemed as the essence of . . . education" at a particular school (p. 589). Scholars also tell us that each group — students, teachers, administrators — shares a subculture with different norms (Waller, 1932; Bidwell, 1965; Metz, 1978; Cusick, 1973, 1983; Lightfoot, 1983; Sarason, 1971; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Changes on one front, within one subculture, do not necessarily guarantee corresponding changes on another front within another subculture. The work and the dynamics are complicated, requiring patience, diligence, imagination, and courage.

This story is also about the conflicts and tensions that have resulted from this ongoing work. There have been, and continue to be, growing pains. This sort of change has its costs. The work is sometimes messy, often unpredictable, and almost always demanding. It requires strong commitment on the part of all participants. Be assured that the story continues beyond the pages of this case study. The work at Galion Middle School is not yet complete, and administrators, teachers and staff describe themselves as being at a crossroad, ready to face new challenges in further developing a school culture that energizes students to think, to solve problems collectively, and to explore the potential of each new idea. They continue to expand the social, as well as the academic, potential of each school activity, pushing themselves to further scrutinize their instructional practices within the classroom.

The first and longest chapter of the story describes the growth of teaching teams at Galion Middle School. We consider how the four instructional teams — three academic core teams and one team focusing on exploratory activities — have distinguished themselves and how the historical, organizational, developmental, and political dimensions of this growth have subsequently changed teacher culture at this school. These teams have been the nexus for all change at Galion Middle School, and so it makes sense to begin here.

Second, we move into the classroom to consider how person-to-person relationships have directed changes in the student and classroom culture at this school. Building relationships, between teachers and students, between and among the students themselves, and between the school and parent community, has been a central means to redefining the nature of school work at Galion Middle School.

Next, we consider the role community has played and how reformers at Galion have attempted to extend their activities beyond the school walls, inviting the community to be a part of a more broadly defined school culture which encourages community input, recognizes the resources available, and is cognizant of expectations and constraints imposed by these environmental influences.

Finally, we contemplate future challenges and the requisite steps to meeting them. Participants at Galion Middle School have caught sight of what is possible when individuals engage in common enterprises with one another. Their ideas and comments reflect understanding of how they become bound together by these common concerns. Participating in the search for common solutions to common problems has become the norm, the way they do business. This kind of associated activity has created a school culture which affords them the collective confidence necessary to move forward. The voices heard throughout this story reveal minds which remain open and vital, dispositions which are realistic about the remaining challenges, and temperaments which face next steps with anticipation and excitement.

Chapter Two

Middle School Teams: Changing Teacher Culture in the Corridors

Reforms at Galion Middle School have been driven by a grade-level team structure within which strong teacher leaders have genuine decision-making authority. The research suggests that young adolescents and teachers who participate within a well-functioning team experience numerous advantages over those who work in self-contained or departmentalized programs. Stevenson (1992) suggests that for students, teams provide a sense of belonging and familiarity. Students who learn in teams build strong interpersonal relationships. They gain recognition as individual team members. Researchers concur that team learning provides students important social, emotional, and academic growth opportunities during the middle school years.

Teachers experience a sense of coherence about their work as they are able to realize common purposes and goals. Team relationships reduce teacher isolation. Team members gain authority as they make decisions about instructional as well as management concerns. The team grows in its ability to solve problems, and individual teachers benefit from this collective intelligence. A sense of collective efficacy results (George, Spreul & Moorefield, 1986; George & Stevenson, 1989; Lounsbury, 1990; Lynch, 1990). Over time, the changes at Galion Middle School have been directed toward realizing these team-related benefits.

Four Team Stories: One Galion Middle School

Though Galion Middle School has adopted teaming throughout the school, it has allowed each team to establish its own unique identity and distinct manner of operation. The result is four teams that continue to distinguish themselves, both in team personality and teaming strategy.

The names taken by the three academic core teams — the "Dream Catchers," "Fighting Falcons" and the "Screaming Eagles" — suggest a high level of energy and enthusiasm. The teachers within each team assume some measure of responsibility for each other's continued motivation. Team identity nurtures individual commitment.

> *We couldn't have it without cooperation among the staff, because otherwise we'd be doing the same old thing year after year after year and we would never be improving. I never dreamed, when I first took this position, that we'd be where we are today.... The only reason that we are there is because we have gone into uncharted waters, and we have wanted to do it on our own. It hasn't been mandated that we would do this. It's been a decision we have made together. . . . I think that's really important, because you are so much more willing to do something when it is your idea.* – Teacher

The Encore Team — the exploratory team comprising art, physical education, Spanish, home economics, industrial technology, and music — stays actively involved with the academic core teams. Members of this team see themselves as essential to the overall academic experience at Galion Middle School.

> *I had some twins my third or fourth year here, and they were getting Fs in everything else. But they got As in Spanish. They were constantly in trouble, so anytime they did anything good, I made sure I let the principal know. . . . He would say, "What are you doing with those boys in there? They are just getting such good grades in your class, so why aren't they in their other classes?" It was because they could do well, and they decided early on that it was something that was doable and not something they were so behind on. I really try to stress that when they come in here. A lot of kids, when they go to high school, still want to take Spanish. I try to tell them that they are here, they have to be here, so why not learn something? Everyone can learn something.* – Encore teacher

Whether within foreign language, physical education, or the arts, these Encore experiences add important meaning to middle school life.

The following introductions to each Galion team describes their differences and similarities. As each team has continued to grow, so has the school culture at large.

Dream Catcher Team

The eighth-grade team is known as the Dream Catchers and has been led by the same teacher leader for a number of years.

> *The Dream Catchers [name] is from the Native American culture. In fact, we had stationery that tells exactly what the dream catcher is and how Native American Indians put it above someone's bed.... [The dream catcher is] supposed to filter out bad dreams and let the good dreams in. The whole goal of our team is to let the kids' good dreams come true here, and help them focus on their good dreams — dreams being their goals.* – Teacher

Working together since 1984, the team has spent a decade and a half refining its strategies for managing daily team activities, planning instructional programs and solving student-related problems. The Dream Catcher's team teachers utilize the daily team planning time for the varying needs of each day. One meeting may be used to review students who are at risk of failing, and another to address interdisciplinary unit development and/or implementation. One day is reserved for parent contacts, one for sharing professional materials, and yet another for distributing building and district-wide information. Teachers report that during team meetings, each teacher regularly brings examples of student work to share and discuss.

While one teacher is designated as the team leader, all the teachers accept leadership roles in developing team curricular units and activities. For example, two teachers from this team have been instrumental in developing a Holocaust unit for the eighth graders. These two teachers have collected teaching material from national conferences and have exchanged information with people around the world. The other team teachers are also active participants in this curricular unit, which introduces students to universal and historical themes related to diversity and tolerance. Having received external grant funding for unit development, the team allows the unit to change and evolve, utilizing speakers, purchasing additional material, and reviewing new sources from across the country.

> *We do the Holocaust unit and I'm very, very much involved in that. I was able to go to Washington, D.C., and to the Holocaust Museum. Because of what we're doing and the materials purchased and the speakers we have brought in, I was accepted into a program through the Jewish Labor Committee. I was able to go to Poland and Israel for three and a half weeks. It helped me grow professionally and personally. We are encouraged here to research and seek out information to help our students experience things that are not readily available within our community — expand their world.* – Teacher

Fighting Falcon Team

As with the Dream Catchers, the Fighting Falcons have a team leader who has worked in that capacity for several years. This team is unique in that it utilizes a looping strategy. The team teaches the same students for two to three years, making it a combined sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade team. The team also integrates the Most Advantageous Alternative Program (MAPP) students who are academically accelerated. The teachers are strongly committed to looping as a means to more individualized student programming. Currently, they are the only team that is engaged in this practice.

> *Other teams have single grade levels. They are reluctant to become involved in looping. I don't think the Encore teachers are reluctant, because they already have all the same kids, all the time. I think the people (this is my perception) who are in the regular seventh- and eighth-grade teams don't see the benefits. They see the added work and the added stress of having the same kids that you had, but we've seen the benefits. Some of our worst kids*

from last year, who had the hardest time adjusting, turn into some of our best kids. We can see the improvement. If the seventh-grade teachers could see their children mature like we do, it would really be encouraging to them, and the eighth-grade teachers would see a whole lot less of that rebellion stuff that goes on in the eighth grade. I think the eighth graders take on a different kind of personality [when they are looped]. – Teacher

The Fighting Falcons have the newest faculty member on their team. Though the teacher had substitute-taught in the building for a number of years, the 1997-98 school year was his first year of teaching full time. During this school year, a challenging situation with a parent allowed the team to grow as a whole and to support the growth of this new team member. This critical incident involved a parent of a special education student who felt that his child's disability excluded him from a team reward activity. The parent felt he was unable to complete the required work because of his lack of reading and organizational skills. The parent's anger was directed toward this first-year teacher, because it was this teacher's assignments that were in question. The parent charged the team, and especially this first-year teacher, with not knowing, nor accommodating, the special needs of his child. The team leader and teachers planned a number of meetings to review the interventions and corresponding documentation that the team had completed in efforts to support this student. The parent was able to see that his child had not fulfilled his responsibilities, even with repeated prompts from the team. The parent further recognized the team's extensive knowledge of his child's particular academic needs.

This episode was revisited by the team several times throughout the year. For the team and its first-year teacher, it prompted reflection on team purpose and process. The team utilized the incident to identify what was working and where it could improve, and the parent has become a voice in the community, praising the efforts and commitment of this teaching team.

Screaming Eagle Team

Screaming Eagles is the name taken by the seventh-grade team at Galion Middle School. This team addresses team leadership differently, with leadership rotating each year. The team has one unit that has become tradition for the team.

We have one on Galion history, and one on the production of maple syrup. In social studies, we take the production of maple syrup and approach it from a business standpoint. How can we market our product? How do you find a good marketing area? What do you need in order to establish a maple syrup business, or any business for that matter? It's totally a business-oriented aspect in social studies. In math, they work on measurements. How much sap does it take to make a gallon of maple syrup? They break down on how much they get based on temperatures. What's a good temperature to tap trees? What's a good temperature where the sap is going to run well? They chart all of this and see where the changes are. Each classroom has a tree that they tap. The nice thing about it is that obvi-

ously all the trees are right in this area, so the climate is going to be the same [for all trees]. The only factors that would be different would be the size of the tree or the type of the tree. The students do a lot of reading on how the business began,... what it was like when they first started making syrup and how it was collected up, and then [they] consider the changes between then and now. Science looks at the different grades of maple syrup. How do you get light, dark and medium amber syrups? In English, they do a lot of writing. They write stories on their production. They've [published] a newspaper on the entire project and everything they've done to the culminating activity, which is a breakfast that we put on for the kids. We invite our school board members and some of the administration and we feed them breakfast with the maple syrup we make. You can look out these windows right here and you can see all the trees we use. – Teacher

This team utilizes the flex period in the middle of the day to address the specific academic concerns of students within their team.

The use of the flex schedule — I'm not going to speak to the entire building but I'll speak to our team — it has allowed us to work a lot more individually with students who are having trouble in specific areas. We've taken our flex schedule, and if [students are] having trouble in math, then we put them in the math classroom with that teacher and she's able to work with them. It's basically an extra period for them. It's like a review session. One of our classes was set up so that you could come in — for example, my room — and work with anybody you wanted to on any subject. It was basically peer tutoring for each other. It gave us the flexibility to move kids from one area to another, depending on what type of help they needed and where they could best get it. – Teacher

Encore Team

The Encore team is unique in that it is composed of teachers whose curricular areas are the arts and exploratory subjects. As an important component of middle school philosophy, Galion embraces the notion that students should be provided carefully integrated enrichment opportunities beyond the core academic disciplines. Unlike the other teams, the Encore team utilizes a common team planning time only two days each week. Individual Encore Team members then meet with the core teams during the remaining weekdays. The Encore team members collaborate with the core teams in planning and implementing their interdisciplinary units. They also work with each other to develop skills across their own content areas.

This team has taken the area of school spirit as their responsibility, working on building pep rallies and assemblies. They promote T-shirt day, encouraging students to wear Galion Middle schools T-shirts to encourage cross-team school spirit.

The Encore team is trying to promote school spirit by having pep assemblies.... [It] has a spirit committee, to connect with their middle school students. – Teacher

A representative from the Encore team is also involved in the principal-led 20/20 leadership team.

The Dimensions of Teaming

In recounting the history of teaming, the teachers across these four Galion teams share various renditions of how interactions have evolved, how tensions develop and are confronted, how goals are established, and how norms are altered. These episodes and transitions expose the historical, organizational, developmental and political dimensions of teaming, and of the changes initiated on their behalf.

Historical Dimensions

Changes to the school structure and culture were first initiated by a former building principal. This principal began his tenure in 1986 and served in that capacity for almost eight years. During that time, he endorsed innovations, provided opportunities for ongoing conversations among the faculty, and allowed teachers to make key decisions about the goals of reform and the appropriate vehicles for accomplishing them. His philosophies about learning and leadership were influential to Galion reform efforts. He shares some of his thoughts and recollections:

Most people really want to do a quality job, but it is the system that messes things up, so one of the things that I've constantly focused on is how we could change the system. There are just so many ridiculous rules that we have established to keep a system going that stand in the way of people doing their jobs. What we tried to do was eliminate as many of those items so that people could come together. We had a building leadership team called the 20/20 team [still functioning today] which was in search of the perfect vision. We used to just sit down and brainstorm ways to solve various problems that we had in the building. That was how the teaming and scheduling changes began. We started with flex scheduling. The other thing I did deliberately, and some people argued against it, I deliberately changed things to make sure the innovations could be successful. Some of the people who I want to call the "settlers," or the people a little less ready to change, sometimes thought I was playing favorites. I don't look at it that way. It you have risk-takers who are willing to take a risk, then you need to give them the tools to be successful. What eventually happened was we began to have more and more people see what was being successful. They began to want to be a part of what was going on. – Former principal

His leadership style continually encouraged people to become involved. The principal modeled the desired experimental disposition by teaching on the first team. He allowed teachers room to ponder and question. He encouraged exploration of different teaming configurations, including teams for only part of the day, teams without science as a participating content area, pilot teams as models. He challenged the faculty to assess these various arrangements, identifying the strengths and limitations of each. The then-assistant principal reflects:

> *It was interesting when we began to develop the MAAP (Most Advantageous Alternative Program), which is our gifted program. It was really our first full attempt at teaming. We really didn't call it teaming yet, although we had teachers working collaboratively together. What happened was they started out with two teachers, three teachers and then four teachers. They developed this team in the mid-1980s. When this term teaming became the new buzzword, we realized we had a team functioning in our own building. We began to zero in on that. We started saying to ourselves, "What have we learned from this team that we have?" and "What can we learn from MAAP in terms of the neat things they do?" It became a model for us because we kind of had a school within a school taking place and really never took the time to examine it.*

A teacher's reluctance to become involved only encouraged the principal to issue another invitation. He suggested different ways teachers might contribute to the overall endeavor.

> *That is what I've always tried to do with administration — give people a chance to run with the ball. If one sort of opportunity doesn't work, then I try something else. I always step back. They can never escape me, because I keep coming back with other options. People overall want to contribute. Even when people would take shots it took me a long time to let it get under my skin. I realized something was driving those comments. I tried not to take the comments personally, and to put myself in their shoes and figure out what was causing them to say those things. Then we would try to address the problem. When people realized they could say things, then there was a lot more opportunity to take risk. We really built the trust.* – Former principal

During this principal's tenure, each traditional junior high school routine was scrutinized in order to determine its compatibility with the new middle school philosophy and structures. This process revealed the inconsistencies and encouraged continuing reforms.

> *One of the processes we used to get people to share their ideas in a nonthreatening way was doing "sticky notes."... We would invite the teachers to make any note they wanted, and they could take those notes and stick them up on the bulletin board, and I would periodically collect them. Sometimes if people thought of an idea, they would just jot it down and stick that on the board.... I'd pick them up, then formulate those into a list of ideas and take those ideas to the staff meetings. It was kind of a wish list. You had your wishes [as] to how*

your class would run or the schedule would run or whatever you'd want. Then they took those ideas to the meetings and discussed them. A lot of people became really involved in those meetings. It was about a five-year project. We started bit by bit looking at things and eliminating. The school originally had six math levels [and] four reading levels, which caused us to be in a very structured schedule. We eventually eliminated these, but again part of the reason that was able to happen was because trust was built up. – Former principal

The people who live and work together in a school must be the ones who determine goals and craft the means to reach them. And the process must be ongoing. Any program or model which offers less, though it may solve the attendant problem in the short run, limits the potential for meaningful, wide-ranging movement and change. The principal understood this tenet of school life and was careful to ensure its legacy beyond his own tenure as principal.

I always pick my successor. I do it very subtly and I'm quiet and work behind the scenes. I just believe [that] when I invest so much time and energy in something,... then I don't want to see it fail. Before I left Galion Middle School, I had identified my assistant as that person so that I would have time to train him. – Former principal

Although the faculty had engaged in significant conversations and had begun to explore teaming and scheduling alternatives, they were still in the initial stages of the work when their assistant principal became their principal. He remembers some of the early concerns that demanded attention.

When we started, we believed in the middle school concept. We had taken on the name middle school, but it was really in name only. We didn't yet function as a middle school, so we began to do some research. We had some staff development about the middle school concept and the middle school child. We also had a retreat centered on identifying "What is a middle school child? Who is the child in the middle?" We had meetings before school, after school and noontime, and everyone was invited to attend. Those that could not attend, their opinions and views were solicited and they could write them down and turn them in. Much of what we came up with in the early formations of the concept — our mission statement, the early restructuring of the operational or the organizational aspects of the building itself — was infrastructure. And, all this really came from the teachers. Once we got some ideas and thoughts about what we wanted, then we began to sit down and decide how we would make those changes. That's how we arrived at the master schedule we now have.

The ideas for the direction that we needed to take, in part, came from the "sticky notes" sessions. We tried teaming in different forms and it just didn't work. Part of what came out of our discussion among the teachers was they would like to have some common planning time. We already had in our negotiated agreement that you had to have prep time, uninterrupted preparation time. Actually, a couple of our teachers began to play around with the schedule. It became kind of obvious that common planning times would be necessary if we were to fur-

ther our teaming processes. There are three or four things that always come up when you start looking at scheduling. You have to look at certification issues, lunchtime, where do you put the exploratory arts classes and how do they fit in the picture. Slowly but surely, it became apparent that we would have to develop two types of teams: an Encore team and Core teams. Then we would try to separate them to free our teachers up, by sending the kids to the related arts classes so we could develop a common prep time and a common team time.

Teachers had to give up some sacred cows, so to speak. Things like — certain teachers like to have certain classes at a certain time of the day. Some of the specials wanted certain advanced classes, but we found out we could no longer offer these. It would tend to fragment the schedule [so that] we had singletons. Slowly but surely, we had discussions about ownership and territorial issues. We began to prioritize. That's really the way it evolved, and everyone gave up a few things. Everyone came to a common agreement of what was important. – Current principal

As a result of these early conversations, these attempts at teaming, and various adjustments to the schedule, the school found itself well positioned for funding opportunities to support further development.

It was interesting because the Effective Schools movement had been going on for probably 12 years before we ever got involved. You could write a grant and get maybe $3,500.00 to $4,000.00, just planting a seed for some school improvement. We didn't get involved until 1992, when someone in the Small Schools Network said, "You know, you ought to look at this." We looked into it through the state department and wrote a grant. It wasn't the money that was important, but the changes we could make, none of which held much of a price tag. That's when we began to really immerse ourselves into the question of what really is an effective school. What is it you must do to deliver an effective system of education? – Former principal

All structural adjustments attempted to reduce teacher isolation and the curricular fragmentation that can result, the end goal being improved student performance.

Our desired goal was to develop sufficient opportunities for learning. The team meetings, of course, were a part of that master schedule, but these were for the purpose of monitoring student progress. We were trying to ... monitor the academic performance of kids and that's how common planning and common team time evolved. You can't do that with the fragmentation and the isolation that existed. – Teacher

The evolution of daily school business at Galion tells a professional learning story. It is not just about team meetings, but about the evolving definitions of the team planning time and the development of teacher talk within teams and across the building. The story is about taking advantage of small opportunities in order to establish the conditions which invite participation, encourage the collective ownership of problems, and create space to test solutions.

Everyone feels good, because we had this little session, "This is what's wrong with our school." Let's face it, whether you want to believe it or not, that pretty much does a person some good: sit down, complain a while, "I feel better." We scratched it out. – Teacher

I saw, in the beginning, the teachers sat down and they gave it a try; they were willing to risk. The risk factor was there. As they risked, they began to see benefits. But they also began to see problems. An example: When we first did our teaming, our team time was, "Well, we'll send the counselor, and the attendance officer, and the assistant principal to take over your classes. They'll cover your classes, one period a week, so that you can meet as a team to do some discussing." And the next thing we knew, they were covering that period, and we were going into lunch. The teachers were sitting around saying, "This is great! But we cannot keep giving up our lunch; there has to be another way." We have to have back-to-back team time and counseling time. – Teacher

Additional organizational adjustments would be necessary in order to make this extended team planning time possible. Currently, Galion functions as a middle school with three academic core teams and one team focusing on exploratory activities. Each core team manages the instructional time block as they see fit. They have daily planning periods to use at the team's discretion. Each team coordinates scheduling with the exploratory Encore team. Together, they continuously explore ways they might maximize the use of each school day.

Organizational Dimensions

Organizational restructuring comes down to finding points of agreement about which characteristics of school life can and should change. Whether it is physical space, schedules, daily routines or certain decision-making structures, agreeing that some change or another is worth trying constitutes the first step. The people in a school must be convinced such a change will matter. They need to see how it will help them solve real problems.

Re-timing for Teaming

The teams have done much to re-time their world. By blocking class periods, they give themselves the option of varying the length of time devoted to subjects, interdisciplinary studies or units. The day is divided into a five core class periods for a total of 212 minutes of core instruction time. In addition, students have 84 minutes of daily Encore instructional time. Teams can choose to divide the core block to suit particular units of study or other team activities. The schedule allows individual teams this flexibility without causing any disruption to the other teams across the building.

The teams will rearrange their schedules as they work together. If they are doing a unit, they may run 20-minute periods and then take all the kids to the cafeteria to do a group activity. That wouldn't have happened before this. Instead of running a 42-minute period, they will run a 20-minute instructional period and then bring all the kids together for a follow-up activity down in the cafeteria or gym. – Teacher

Teachers are now ready to challenge themselves further in utilizing this scheduling flexibility. Rather than relying too heavily upon individual-teacher-taught, 42-minute class periods, they now wish to explore more team-taught extended blocks.

About five or six years ago, we had that first real full-blown teaming throughout the entire school. Part of what we started looking at three years ago, after we had evolved through our first three years, was eliminating waste in terms of the day and trying to redeem the day. We began to consider issues like travel time because we had developed the teams. The teams were functioning pretty well and we had physically moved kids into parts of the building where we could put them at [the] end of the hallways. We determined that we didn't need three minutes between classes. The kids were so close in proximity to their other classes that they only needed 15 to 20 seconds to get to the next class. I looked at the day and saw we had four instructional periods in the morning and we had three minutes between each, so that was 12 minutes of actual time the kids were just wandering around. I looked at our lunch and I determined that I could move lunch back 30 minutes. I then added those 12 minutes to 30 and realized that I could get 42 minutes out of the morning, and 42 minutes is what we had set aside as a class period. At that point I gained a full instructional period and we actually came up with the idea that now we could have five academic instructional time slots in the morning before lunch. It came about because of the thinking about eliminating waste and trying to redeem the day for time on task. – Administrator

Within their new schedule they have created a daily period for team planning, back to back with their individual counseling periods. This team time allows the team to combine these periods for extended discussion where needed. Within some of the teams, team time is further managed by designating each day for certain considerations (e.g., Monday — students with problems; Tuesday — schedule changes; Wednesday — professional development; Thursday — unit development).

Team time lasts only 35 minutes, more if extended into the counseling period. Those matters that can be expediently addressed tend to take precedent. These include administrative arrangements (schedules, trips, procedural adjustments), student problems (behavior, support, incomplete work, application of discipline policy, contacting parents), information (notices of upcoming events, summaries of recent school committee meetings), or program organization (curriculum alignment or mapping reminders, review of the set-up for special days or forthcoming units).

Each team selects a colleague to act as the team leader each school year. Some of the teams have leaders that have held that position for several years, while other teams have rotated this responsibility among their members. All teams note that general leadership responsibilities are shared among members as they conduct day-to-day business. The team leader serves as the link to other teams and to the administration. He/she acts as the monitor of the team's daily meeting periods, facilitating the optimum use of this time.

> *One day a week we generally take a look at our students. Who is struggling academically and behaviorally? We try to make adjustments and, if we need to, we move them from class to class. Our schedule allows us to move kids from one classroom into another. They still have the same five academic areas in the morning and their Encore is not affected. That has worked real well for us. We look at whether or not we need to call someone's parents in, and it gives us time to meet with parents. It allows us the opportunity to bring the kids in by themselves and sit them down to discuss their problem areas. It allows everybody to be involved in the behavior and the academics of every individual. One day we basically spend going through any formal meetings that have taken place, any information that needs to be disbursed to the team. One day is open if anybody has anything that they found out from professional development activities. We try and set it up for different days to do different activities.* – Teacher

School-wide Communication and Planning

To maintain communication between the teams and the administration, each team leader represents their team during the principal's 20/20 meeting. These day-long meetings take place monthly. Aptly named, the meetings allow for focused discussions on building and district goals. The leadership group learns about the work of other teams, discusses building-wide concerns, reviews evaluative data connected with the Venture Capital benchmarks, and discusses district-wide concerns introduced by the superintendent. The 20/20 meetings are also action planning sessions. The group addresses problems as well as marking progress on past decisions. The following is an observation of one 20/20 meeting during the 1997-98 school year.

> *The 20/20 team began their day-long work session greeting each other and enjoying the baked goods and beverages provided.*
>
> *A teacher from each instructional team and the Encore team was present along with the principal and assistant principal. The session began with a discussion on the effectiveness of the current parent conferences — the number of parents attending, variety of conference formats utilized, intent of conferences and possible suggestions for the spring conferences were issues reviewed. The group discussed the changes that have occurred in relation to parent conferencing.*

The leadership team then moved to discussion on various benchmarks associated with the Venture Capital Grant and the progress being made toward meeting each. The teachers focused on the number of students earning an F grade on their report card and the types of conferencing strategies that were used to share this information with parents. The grant budget concerns were reviewed, and the teachers requested greater involvement in the expenditure of funds. The issuance of new standards by the Ohio High School Athletic Association and how these were connected with the Venture Capital grant benchmarks was discussed. The teachers utilized this information to further consider how attendance and discipline data relate to student grades. They discussed several interventions each of the teams might undertake in these areas [attendance and discipline].

The 20/20 group spent a period of time discussing and planning the upcoming staff in-service and aligned the goals for the day with corresponding activities. They assigned facilitating duties.

The day was very fast paced and the work of the 20/20 team targeted. Each member remained engaged in the discussions at hand. Each teacher expressed... opinions. Administrators acted as facilitators and sometimes as devil's advocates throughout the day, attempting to elicit all available perspectives. – University researcher

Following each 20/20 meeting, team leaders are responsible to take information back to their team. Plans and activities requiring additional team input are further discussed within individual teams. Team feedback is reported back to the next monthly 20/20 meeting. This horizontal system of communication ensures that information is shared more consistently throughout the school. Specific roles and routines have been institutionalized and are modeled in various forms within each individual team.

Most of the teams keep minutes of their team meetings. The 20/20 team, which is composed of team leaders and other people, also disseminates information to the team chair people in the form of minutes or the agenda. That's one of the cases where teams get that information in different ways. Some will get it verbally, and a couple of the teams actually make copies. The team leader will make a copy of his notes from the meeting and share them with the team. Most of the teams have either a notebook or a file. – Teacher

At Galion, leadership is a team endeavor, one which calls upon the collective intelligence of the group and requires common accounts of the actions taken. Meeting agendas and minutes establish a public record, and over time this record creates a shared history of important decisions.

Activities in schools have a way of growing stale. Numbed by the routines and braced against the constant barrage, people begin merely to go through the motions. School leaders must persuade people that conversations are worth having and that the time spent will matter. They need to convince participants that new structures amount to more than fads. The new organizational arrangements and prac-

tices, established to help advance reforms, must be genuine and must remain vital and animated. Living them, not merely going through the motions, is what will make each a significant part of things.

Developmental Dimensions

As teachers converse, they build meaning. Talking some, and listening some, they grow smarter about solving problems. They learn to agree and to disagree. They struggle with ideas and identify emotions. In building meaning from their experiences, they grow as professionals.

Teams and Teacher Growth

Galion's teaching teams create a collegial atmosphere which encourages professional learning. New teachers are mentored within the context of daily interactions with team members. As teams plan and implement instructional units, teachers teach one another. They guide those who were not as deeply involved in planning and together they engage in ongoing critiques of the work.

Learning also occurs by walking about. Team members catch quick glimpses of one another at work. They engage in collegial exchanges throughout the day. They examine room designs and samples of student work displayed in each other's classrooms. The team provides a safety net for risk-taking. Members benefit from making mistakes or gains side by side, and from puzzling through novel strategies together.

More formal opportunities for learning also exist within teams. The teams function as forums for professional discourse in reviewing materials and readings, examining the experiences of those returning from conferences and workshops, and making sense of the data from such sources as their own surveys, discipline statistics and proficiency tests.

As Galion teams engage in ongoing communication, they foster a teacher culture which encourages professionalism.

> *I think the worst thing any school can ever do is be satisfied with how things are, and I don't ever see that kind of attitude in this building. Every year brings new challenges and new things to be concerned about. I think our staff is constantly trying to meet the needs of the students who come through this building. It would be great if we didn't have to worry about the financial end of things, but that's a problem every school district has. It would be nice if so many of these kids didn't come to school with so much baggage, but there are so many needs that need to be met. The ultimate goal is to be successful in educating our children, and that incorporates a lot of different realms.* - Teacher

Friedman (1997) maintains that "[t]he team creates a context within which open, collective inquiry into the needs of students and into the values and goals of schooling becomes an integral and essential part of the teaching task itself" (p. 367). Teachers live and work differently when they teach in teams.

When teachers begin to make autonomous decisions that extend beyond the scheduling of classroom activities, assigning of homework, selection of appropriate teaching methods, and the sequencing of content, their professional lives change. When they have the authority to decide what they will teach and why, teachers begin to actually shape curriculum and question its foundations.

Changing Images of Teachers

Teaming at Galion has resulted in a changed image of what it means to be a teacher. Each day includes scheduled time for teams to meet, plan, discuss, debate, and compare approaches and perspectives. Over the years, teachers have come to define themselves in relation to both what they do with students and how they work with their team colleagues, with both roles assuming comparable importance. Simply stated, many cannot imagine succeeding at the job without this interconnected conception of what it means to teach. The manifestations of this changing image are stated or implied in various observations.

> *Having taught social studies for 28 years, there has been an evolution and a change in how I do that. My first 15 to 18 years, I was a social studies teacher — I read social studies books. I was not a teacher, I was a social studies teacher, and everything revolved around social studies. In the last 10 years, I have become a teacher — looking at the mechanics of teaching, looking at how teaching is done, what techniques will make me a better teacher. I read professional books now, not just social studies books. I have more ownership, more desire to do the best I can for the kids. I grew the first 17 years as a social studies teacher, but the past 10 years I've grown as a teacher, as an educator, which has been a lot more fun. It's exciting, even though it's a risk. I love working with the people I work with, and when I talk to groups, I say, the first 17 years I was a good teacher. I was an excellent teacher. What we have done here has made me an even better teacher.* – Teacher

Galion teachers continue to base their decisions and actions on the knowledge they have gained regarding adolescent students and their particular stage of cognitive, social and emotional development. Teachers conceive of themselves as responsible for promoting this development on all fronts. They talk about connecting with students in authentic ways, and about structuring opportunities for them to connect with one another and their community. From school-wide activities, to team identities, to student incentive programs, teachers see themselves as facilitating all manner of student learning. This inclusive responsibility has become central to their image of themselves as teachers.

In the Course of a Day

Observing the teams go about their daily schedules, you will notice cordial conversations among the staff members around the staff mail boxes, work room and lounge. Everyone seems very busy, getting ready for the day with teachers getting their mail or copying material for the day or dropping off their lunches in the lounge refrigerator. No one wastes time in the lounge prior to the first bell.

Greeting colleagues en route to their team areas, the teachers use the early morning time to bring each other up to date on any pertinent student or school information and to greet team members. Before the bell rings, students are seen stopping by the classrooms to share a "good morning" with a teacher or to ask questions about the day's assignments. Many of the students simply chat with teachers, with respect and interest demonstrated by the teachers for the student and the students for their instructors. With the morning bell, the students quickly get to their seats, and while some talk quietly to their neighbors, others begin to read in their free time reading books. Teachers in each of the open classrooms begin their lessons, teacher and students seeming to ignore the activities going on in the adjoining classroom area clearly seen from their seats. Teachers move easily among the students, often calling students by name and making personalized comments of encouragement.

"Steven and Keith, let me know when you have selected a book. There are many there that I know you both will enjoy." (Students at book shelves selecting independent reading book.)

Within lessons, some students raise their hands to contribute, while others whisper to their neighbors, seeking help on the classwork. The teachers move about the room, stopping by a group of students that appears to be off task while addressing another student by name, asking... a question. As a group of students continues to whisper to each other at a level that begins to distract the class, the teacher asks for the class to refocus.

"It's important that you all understand how to complete these problems, so you will do well on the quiz tomorrow. If you have a question, let's discuss it as a class, not just with our neighbors."

At the completion of each class, the students move in an orderly manner to the next class. Friends find each other to share conversation. Teachers are also seen finding each other to share a piece of student work or express a concern from the previous class. An observer is struck by the flow and connectedness of the students' and the teachers' day. For example, students and teachers rehearse speeches for the building-wide political convention in social studies, while in math they review percentages and projection figures as they pertain to election results.

Within the open classroom spaces, teachers may comment on curricular connections between classes. One teacher may walk to the open area between rooms and ask a question of his or her teammate. The students seem to process these occurrences readily, listening to the question and the response. Once the exchange is finished, they return to their teacher and focus on their classroom activity. The science teacher, discussing how scientists identify unknown materials, notes the importance of mathematics in the overall process. He looks to the adjoining room, which is occupied by the math teacher. Finding her monitoring the seatwork of her students, he calls out a question to her to support his science lesson. Both classes turn to listen to the exchange between the teachers and then return to their respective lessons. This flow of support and information between and among teachers provides models for the students as they work with one other. – University researcher

Teaming relocates teachers in the school: physically, so that they share a common space; structurally, so that time can be used as a resource and not as a barrier; operationally, so that manageable groups can coordinate their work more efficiently and effectively. The open-area design of the building creates a physical zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) where teachers can benefit from one another's problem solving. This physical space permits easy and informal access among team members. They can incidentally observe each other on the job, talk about teaching on the run, swap ideas and stories about particular situations, monitor the behavior of students in other classes, and steal glimpses of a team unit as implemented in other subjects. As part of a team, teachers have more of a stake in knowing what each other does and experiences. Further, within these daily interactions, the team is able to learn a process for solving problems, one which individual members internalize (the "Fighting Falcon Way," if you will). The proximity of team members makes this mutual understanding and strategizing something that can be readily pursued in the course of the day.

Right now we are much more of a community than we were before, because we work more closely together. I'm not talking about socializing and things like that, because we used to do a lot of that, but we are using our time more efficiently to work together professionally and to get a lot accomplished. We know each other more as teachers than just people, so I think we know more sides of each other and we've become a team. You know the characteristics of other people, so when you have a job to do, it's just like everybody knows what they do best and we're going to do it... It's like boom, boom, boom, and we get it done. It's like a well-oiled machine now, because we have worked at working together. Something else that's different is I'm not stuck in my own little hole the whole day long and never see anybody. I have daily meetings,... I get together with other members of the staff, and we discuss projects that we're working on or we actually work on a project. We get assemblies together, make phone calls, get presenters in, and we are actively working on school-related issues. Before we never did that. – Teacher

> *It's a very open atmosphere, and people know each other. New faculty are kind of absorbed very quickly and taken under the wing, so to speak, and everyone's opinion counts. That is something we've worked very hard to get. There are still individuals here and there who don't feel their opinions count, but that's just a personal thing. We feel opinions count. Any suggestion that I have ever taken to either a building representative or a team leader or any of the committees has always been well received and discussed. I've never been shot down or told that is wasn't a valid idea.* – Teacher

Just as teachers utilize their peers as sounding boards for testing ideas, students are encouraged to share their thoughts with one another. Teachers model these behaviors throughout the day.

> *Yes, I think people have become nosy. If they see something going on in somebody else's team, they don't sit back and say, "That looks nice." They ask questions. They try to find out what you're doing and how you're doing it. When I first got here, I heard a lot of, "So and so is doing this or that and we're not going to mess with anything like that." I don't hear that anymore. People are curious as to what is going on elsewhere. They learn from one another.* – Teacher

Dufour and Eaker (1998) maintain that this sort of modeling is critical to any change effort and that, when present, the effects of such contextual teaching/learning experiences are felt throughout the school and school district:

> *Students are more likely to function as continuous learners and effective collaborators if their teachers demonstrate these characteristics. Teachers are more likely to work collaboratively if their principals engage them in collaborative decision making. Principals are more likely to experiment if their superintendents take risks and regard failed initiatives as the opportunities to begin again more intelligently. (pp. 110-111)*

The assistant superintendent describes district level administrative team meetings:

> *It's been my experience [that] where you jam things down people's throats, you may see a quick improvement, but it doesn't last. I would rather do three things well and have them last way beyond me than to do 10 things and have them end as soon as I walk out the door. Collaboration: we meet once every two weeks as an administrative team. We include the Student Assistance Director and Special Education Coordinator. We have a basic philosophy that it's okay to make a 30-second fool of yourself, to come up with an idea and let everybody laugh, and then go on from there.* – Administrator

Those who have studied traditional teacher culture (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1991; Sarason, 1971; Waller, 1965; Willower, 1968, 1989) find teachers establishing specific norms for interacting with one another. Some of the rules include never interfering in another teacher's classroom

affairs and always being self-reliant with one's own. Good teachers rarely ask for help, because they seldom have problems they cannot solve alone. A teacher who reveals a weakness, with the exception of the novice teacher, risks admitting incompetence. Often there is ambivalence on the part of teachers regarding their relationships with other teachers. Some of this may result from fear of criticism, some from simple competition, and perhaps some reflects the varying levels of professional confidence among the members of a given faculty.

Teaming seems to nurture another sort of teacher culture where interest in a colleague's work does not translate into interference, where problems are tackled collectively as a matter of course, and where strong professional relationships between and among teachers begin to extend the definition of what it means to be a teacher. Team members begin to see their professional influence as extending beyond individual classroom matters to encompass curricular, programmatic, and policy-related concerns. Teachers who work as a team create an expansive culture which promotes individual growth at the same time it advances the organization's capacity to grow more discerning of itself.

Political Dimensions

The arguments for giving teachers broad discretion within school decision-making arenas are compelling. Working in the closest and most sustained contact with students and their parents, teachers are in the best position to make day-to-day decisions about their work (Shedd & Bacharach, 1991). To the degree that a body of technical knowledge regarding teaching and learning exists, teachers are the experts. Certainly teachers possess the most intimate knowledge of classroom processes and learner characteristics. They hold the closest view of daily classroom tasks. Many of the reforms at Galion Middle School have changed teachers' roles within the school's decisions structures.

Zones of Decision Making

In considering the history of decision making within the school, most teachers remember a time when it was the principal who determined how the school would change. Sometimes these decisions were made at other points in the administrative hierarchy by senior administrators, the school board, or state policy makers. The only decisions that teachers made were those made behind closed classroom doors.

> *When I started here, I had a room, four walls, and a door. I closed it and I kept to myself. Nobody really knew what I was doing, and I didn't know what other people were doing. As I tell people I talk to, the only time I saw teachers was when they went past my door to the bathroom.* – Teacher

> *Sometimes [decisions] used to come from the ivory tower [administration]. One of our people said that it used to be that decisions were covert activities that were done in secret and just kind of dropped on teachers like the Ten Commandments.* – Teacher

With teaming, teachers have a greater investment in decisions that affect school activity beyond the classroom. Reconceiving decision structures shifts the source of incentive from individual to collective autonomy and self-determinism. This sort of collective energy can be highly motivating to teachers. The research suggests that participating in the governance of a school and being empowered to make consequential decisions is both engaging and satisfying. Individuals begin to extend a new level of commitment on behalf of the whole. Teams control their own program decisions and, through representatives on school committees, influence the way school policies and procedures inform and are informed by team preferences.

> *Teaming would be the greatest way that ideas, structures and disciplines come together. A perfect example would be the block scheduling. The reason we're able to collaborate so much is because of our schedule and because we team. We get so much information from each other because we team and we have the time together. We are able to work on curriculum because we have the time and the team structures.* – Teacher

The principal is no longer the sole agent of change, but rather a partner in the process. Teachers have more of a voice and choice, opening the zones of decision making within the school.

> *We are no longer people that the principal tells what to do.* – Teacher

> *The administrators got involved when we were looking at what some of the things [the teachers] were trying to accomplish. We are still learning today how to best do things, but really, the changes came about through trial and error on the part of the teachers. Each team has [its] own way of doing things.* – Administrator

The locus of control is within the teams; the power of the principal depends more on connections *with* rather than authority *over*.

> *I think there's a lot of collaboration too with the administration in this school. I feel that they value the teacher's input. We have lots of committees; we're even looking at new issues this year that are connected with key concerns from the district's strategic plan.* – Teacher

Cooperation and Conflict

Blase (1991) speaks about how individuals and groups use formal and informal power to achieve their goals within organizations. Teams or individual team members may employ cooperative or conflict-oriented tactics to influence and/or protect priorities. Within collaborative groups, there is always a need to balance "the power of one versus the summative or perhaps synergistic power of the whole"

(Hart, 1998, p. 104). Both within the teams and in the relations each team establishes with the school, there are numerous instances in which individuals or groups manage, support or protect what the team or an individual team member is trying to do.

> *We all have the feeling here that no one is better than everyone else and we're all professionals. No one ever criticizes anyone's opinions. If there is something that someone wants to do, then we know the channels to go through to get our opinions heard. We can bring up things in staff meetings. Some ideas have been good and they've produced good things in our building. Other ideas have not proven fruitful and they've just fallen by the wayside, but everyone's opinion counts. We have a very good atmosphere and a very good working relationship. That doesn't mean we don't disagree on some things, because we've certainly had some disagreements, whether it's what to include in the multicultural unit or what we as a school should be working toward. We do disagree on some things, and some people think some things are more important than others. But if my idea is not expanded upon this year, then maybe we'll do something with it down the road.* – Teacher

> *Everyone here is an adult, and we've been working together long enough and closely enough. We know how to do it most of the time without offending the other people. Sometimes feelings do get hurt, but you have this in life. When doesn't that happen? It's not something that goes on and on. It's dealt with, and if you step on someone's toes, you apologize, they forgive you, and you move on.* – Teacher

> *Just one little story for you, that happened to us. I made a statement: "We're struggling a little bit with our Holocaust unit." For three weeks, it went really great; so we paralleled all these units together. Last week we came in, and two of my teammates who were in charge of the Holocaust unit — we decided that's how we would manage the unit, by putting two of the team in charge — they came in last Tuesday and said, "Look, guys, we're really struggling right now. We don't know what we're doing right now. Maybe we shouldn't meet on this right now." We knew the unit was going to go for another 8 to 10 days. I told them, "That's totally unacceptable." At which time, four flying darts, from these two teammates, came right at me, from their eyes. They were going to kill me. But I said, "That's just totally unacceptable. Maybe that's too big a responsibility for just two people, so this week, the whole team is going to determine what we're going to do to pick that unit up to where it needs to be." As a team, that's what we did. That's what teams are going to do, they're going to struggle sometimes. Now, if I'd said, "That's totally unacceptable, go over there in the corner and figure it out," they'd have spent the next hour complaining about me.* – Teacher

The early days of teaming were fragile — some were suspicious; some worried about being told what to do; some did not want their practices open to scrutiny. Maybe even a few preferred to take orders from a principal rather than from colleagues.

> *Collaborating — working on a team — requires that you, in a sense, give up individuality. There are a lot of people who just don't like the idea of what we're doing. In fact, we still have a couple of staff members who aren't comfortable with it. Let's face it, collaboration on a team is a lot of extra work. Some people don't want the extra responsibility. This can make it hard on a team. [Teachers] may want their own classroom, run it the way they want, and yet they will tell you that they can easily see the benefits to teaming. They just don't want to give up any part of their individuality.* – Teacher

These individual concerns had to be addressed. Some teachers had to be convinced that the extra time was worth the investment. The teams had to learn how to disagree, live through tensions and include everyone, even in moments when the preference was to exclude or ignore those who opposed or were hesitant.

Team initiatives require consensus. Each team had to develop a process with some semblance of ground rules in order to work through conflicts. One team shared an instance when a spontaneous question ("What are you doing that for?") brought a strong reaction from a team member. The incident resulted in some important realizations about individual boundaries.

> *When we develop a unit, — let's say a scientific method unit. — there's writing in a scientific method unit., so students have to know the ins and outs of that. And who better to do that then the person closest to that subject area, the person with a passion about writing? At times I will ask, "What are we doing this for?" It's a simple question. But some of my team members have actually told me, "You know, don't ever say that to me again." I didn't know it was the wrong question. Things went on, we kind of got on edge, and then after the meeting the person came up and said, "Don't ever do that to me again." I said, "What ?" The person said "Don't ever ask me that question in front of everybody." I said, "What question?" And she said, "What are we doing that for?" I didn't realize that I was trampling on her turf. You know, I was sort of closing in.* – Teacher

Team members must learn to negotiate personal and professional boundaries. When individual teacher practice becomes the subject of inquiry, individual teachers may feel challenged. Teams should not avoid these uncomfortable moments, but rather should find safe ways for participants to challenge themselves and each other.

> *We've made some big boo-boos. When we first tried the team, we tried to do it on a limited basis; we tried to do it with some people that would be kind of cooperative, and not kick up a fuss. And we found it wouldn't work. Those not involved were observing and thinking, "What the heck is going on?" We had the tail wagging the dog, a little bit. So we had to correct our mistakes.* – Teacher

Too often the skeptic on a given day is marginalized. For sake of expedience or to maintain harmony, we may choose to avoid or mollify. And yet, rather than ignoring the disgruntled voice, the wis-

est teams find ways to include this point of view within their problem-solving habits and routines. Constructive argumentation can be become a cultural norm, giving everyone opportunity to practice the habit of closely scrutinizing an issue from all sides.

Accountability

Accountability involves the extent to which teachers balance their sense of moral duty to students with their professional duty to colleagues and to the profession. With the greater autonomy afforded teams, many Galion teachers have developed a deeper sense of responsibility to their colleagues and to their collective endeavors.

The teacher-to-teacher relationships within and across teams have evolved and are supported not only by social connections but by specific professional activities.

> *I see teachers going out and wanting to learn about not just their subject but their profession. Before, I didn't see our teachers going to conferences or taking professional days; it just didn't happen. We didn't have a problem in finding substitute coverage for professional leaves — nobody took them. I've read more professional journals, I've been to more staff development, I've been to more conferences in the past 10 years than I was the first 17 years.* – Teacher

The various avenues of interaction are fluid, supported by a collective respect and appreciation for what each member brings to the overall endeavor.

> *I think just the little notes of encouragement are important. It's just a sense that you have that others appreciate what you're doing and you feel like they're supportive. You're not going to agree on every issue that comes down the road, but people will give you input. They will listen to you when you have questions and they seem to [be] interested in you finding your niche. They are patient with you when you haven't.* – Teacher

Colleagues accept each other's limitations. They understand that each person brings something to the enterprise, and they allow participants the time to determine where they fit best. As individuals have the opportunity to share their strengths and expertise, they become more willing to contribute to the collective learning experiences of the team.

> *If they [colleagues] want to come in or want to see what is going on, there isn't anyone on our team or in the building that would say, "No, I don't want you in there." Any person, any job — people have their own ways of doing things. We let them do what they want. When they come in and want to try something differently, that's okay and we'll help them out.* – Teacher

> *Part of our team is real good at writing [interdisciplinary] units, and [some] of us are not, so we're learning. That's where we need to start: with the basic goal and questions of what do we want to learn, and then figure how we're going to accomplish that.* – Teacher

> *I think the benefits of teaming outweigh the costs. I think that sometimes you have to consider the good of the entire team over your personal goals, whether they're personal or professional goals. That goes with being a team member.* – Teacher

Rather than viewing teammates as the competition, teachers begin to accept each other as allies engaged in a mutually beneficial enterprise. As participants, they grow increasingly committed to their common goals as well as to each other.

Team Dilemmas: Tensions, Conflicts and Debates

Friedman (1997) suggests, and experiences at Galion Middle School seem to confirm, that teaming challenges the underlying assumptions of school life and "raises them as questions for which there are no immediate answers. [Thus,] teaching teams increase the degree of uncertainty that teachers and schools face in their practice" (p. 367). At the same time, Friedman maintains that teaming also "provides the mechanism within which uncertainty can be contained and transformed into task-related knowledge and skill through an on-going process of learning" (p. 367).

Moving through uncertainty to knowledge can be an unsettling experience. A certain level of tension accompanies all such learning. Teaching teams at Galion Middle School have experienced these sorts of pressures. At times, the tensions have hindered progress. Other times such tensions have provided the necessary impetus to move teams forward.

In nurturing their teams to be strong enough to weather these storms, members have most often directed energy internally, and so conscious efforts to link teams have been limited.

Strong Team Identities/Weak Interteam Ties

Dukewits and Gowin ([1996] as cited in Dufour & Eaker, 1998)examined the work of 150 teams over an eight-year period. Their research revealed a number of characteristics common to effective teams. Members of effective teams share a set of common beliefs and attitudes. They trust and respect one another and so communicate openly and participate willingly. They believe they have the authority to make decisions and assume responsibility for these decisions. They manage all meetings with clear ground rules and establish roles for each participant. Further, they always follow written agendas and keep a record of proceedings. The most effective teams discuss the manner in which they function day to day and take time to assess their actions over time (Dukewits & Gowin as cited in Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Similar norms continue to develop within Galion teaching teams. They provide the fuel and the tools for advancing common goals.

> *The mind set in our building is, "our team does what is best for our team." You've got our administrators saying, "You guys are doing a great job!" Ultimately when you make decisions, they are good decisions because somebody will question the direction that the team*

wants to go if it doesn't make sense for kids. It's powerful to sit there in a team and have such a focus. There aren't a lot of mandates that have to come from the principal, because when the teams get together in their team meetings, they're making decisions based upon what's best for young kids. I think that's a critical point. I sense that people have a feeling here. They're in charge of their own destiny. – Teacher

The chemistry that's developed within the team has kind of taken over. It's happened over time. We were thrown together, put together. Now this is not to say that sometimes, the chemistry just doesn't work. On a given day, a team member may say, "Hey, just leave me alone. I don't want anything to do with it." It doesn't work. We can't work together. With our team you may bring in another person from another team and it may not work. That may be like putting acid inside of something really sweet, or putting vinegar in a dessert. It's our chemistry that has developed over time and created what we have that works. In our team we constantly walk in and out of each other's rooms, walking back and forth, talking over what's going on between classes and in the middle of a class. We're sharing. We're really working as a family. I think we have a structure that is run by what we feel works for us. – Teacher

The commitment to the team often causes building-wide concerns to take a back seat. Energies become so focused on team activities that little reserves remain for communicating at the school level. Though teachers within teams have time to share and discuss, few cross-team conversations ever happen. Time becomes a barrier, minimizing opportunities for such collaboration. This is a concern expressed by the staff.

I think that [cross-team communication] is a problem. We have some really good people doing some really good things, and yet people who work at the SERRC Center [professional development center located 20 miles from the school] hear more about what teachers are doing in this building than I do. I teach in the same school! The reason right now is that old kicker, time. We don't have time to meet with each other. We need to move into this area — interteam communications. – Teacher

Sometimes, well, there are a few of us that aren't included in a team, and I think that hurts some. We do have staff meetings where we talk about a lot of different things. Probably the distance and the fact that some teams eat together in a different place other than the lounge keeps us from talking with each other. – Teacher

From my personal standpoint, I think sometimes it's difficult to collaborate with the other three teams because we don't have a common time to meet. It's either over lunch or after school, and sometimes schedules don't permit getting together like you'd like. We do have team leaders representing our teams [who] meet with the other team leaders, but we don't have that daily communication that we sometimes could use when we're working together on certain things. – Teacher

During the fall 1997, interteam communication was identified as a school-wide priority. A committee came together to investigate the problem and generate possible solutions. One to be instituted at the start of the 1998-99 school year was the distribution of individual team meeting minutes across all teams. This represents the beginning of an ongoing inquiry.

Team and School Identity

The teams have developed distinct identities to the degree that some observers see them as self-contained centers of activity, with little or no connection to one another. Such a structure may support a competitive environment within the school.

> *There is that little sense of thinking, "Well, to be quite honest with you, I'm kind of a prideful person. I don't want them [other teams] to be able to say that their unit's all that much better than mine."* – Teacher

The extent to which teachers stress the development of their team, the school, or both is a changing story at Galion. This team-versus-school identity has proven a delicate balance to maintain. More recently, participants have attempted to encourage a compromise, a kind of diversity within community where more attention is given to how the teams embody the priorities of the school. Some teams still struggle with how to take part in the school at large without entirely being a part of or apart from it. Even those teams that seem comfortable celebrating each team's successes, as well as those shared by the entire school, have not always found ways to intervene when other teams are not succeeding. When teams are in trouble, most often the response has been "hands off."

> *It's just been expected that we will work in teams, and I know that's been a problem for one of the teams. They just kind of said, "Here's the team you're working with," and that team wasn't functioning as well as I think they would've liked. It was kind of like everybody was floundering, and I don't think they had worked as strongly as some of the other teams.* – Teacher

What is the appropriate role for teams to play in such a situation? Should support or intervention come from some other source? The leadership structure within this middle school depends upon the team leaders. These team leaders function as the compass for the teams. Simultaneously, there is a district-wide structure of department heads that have historically facilitated changes within the district. The department head is a union-negotiated position and is supported by a salary stipend, while the middle school team leader position is not. At the middle school, team leader duties and responsibilities are understood, whereas those for the department head position have become unclear and unmonitored. All but one of the middle school team leaders also holds the title of department head. Having one person in the building completing leadership tasks without receiving comparable compensation, however, produces conflict. This issue is recognized as one that must be addressed. Many acknowledge that is will not be easy.

> *The department heads don't seem to have the responsibilities that the team leaders do. I think the reason for that is we've been concentrating so much on the team concept. We have even talked about, "Why don't we do away with department heads and just have team leaders?" The response has been, "Excuse me — I'm making $2,000, and you want to take that from me? I'll go down fighting about that one." This has been temporarily resolved by identifying a team leader that didn't worry about getting paid to be a team leader, but after a while this team leader began to feel the same way and asked why he couldn't be paid.* – Teacher

The middle school has had conversations with the district and the union regarding this issue. One suggested resolution was to allow payment to team leaders, but this would have strained district funds, resulting in staff cuts. The solution was therefore deemed unacceptable, forcing, as it did, a choice between building strategy and district politics.

> *If we met as a staff in the school's Media Center to talk about the department head/team leader problem, if it was suggested that we actually have department heads getting paid for not doing much of anything and could we maybe do something to combine those positions, you would hear a hush come over our staff like you would not believe. All of the air would be sucked out of the Media Center.* – Teacher

> *This is a staff problem, this is our school problem, so we should attack this from the same leverage point that we did our teaming. But, the problem is we will hit home on a personal basis for one or more teachers, so that makes this problem a little bit different.* – Teacher

At this time, the district-level problem remains unresolved. The current principal initiated an internal solution for fall 1998, encouraging a department head to assume leadership of the remaining team. In this case, the principal intervened, as may be appropriate. Yet, in a school where teacher authority is the norm, it would seem that teams might grow more proactive in this regard. Such administrator troubleshooting is not uncommon within school reform efforts when new structures supplant outdated ones. School leaders find themselves crafting partial solutions which may, in fact, reinforce the very norms and habits they are attempting to change.

Changing culture requires structural, behavioral and attitudinal changes, all in combination with each other (Wonycott-Kytle & Boyotch, 1997). At Galion Middle School, the instructional teams have been the vehicle for this multidimensional change. The result has been a reconstruction of teachers' daily work life: how they structure their time, how they make decisions, how they interact with one another, and how they conceive of themselves as teachers within the profession. One is now moved to ask how these changes in teacher culture affect students' school life within the classroom. It is to this aspect of Galion's changing culture that we now turn our attention.

Chapter Three

Middle School Relationships: Changing Student Culture in the Classroom

Middle school teachers succeed by way of their students, while their students struggle to live their lives in their own right. These two groups share different subcultures. Where these two subcultures intersect, there is too often discord. Everything from the order of daily events to the coherence of long-term educational policies can be potentially threatened. When possible, the two groups negotiate terms of peaceful coexistence. In a way, students and their teachers live out school life together, separately.

And yet, school can offer places of common ground between teachers and students. Learning provides a natural vehicle when school structures and conventions support the natural rhythms of cooperation. Galion teachers are committed to changing conventions which separate and, instead, seek to build relationships — teacher to student, student to student, and teacher to parent to student. These relationships grow out of school work, creative expression, and the honest support of one person's efforts by another.

Teacher-to-Student Relationships

To maximize the possible student benefits of teaming, the connections between teacher and student must be based on mutual trust and respect. Such connections between students and their teachers, however, cannot occur unless teachers begin to view their students as individuals who bring real capabilities and talents to the relationship.

All student are different. They learn in different ways, have different interests, see things from different perspectives. Each comes to school with a unique history. Some already know a great deal; others have much more to learn than any one person could possibly teach in a single year. Galion teachers see their students as having much to offer one another. They attempt to create learning experiences

through which students can cooperate with their peers and thus build relationships. Day-to-day life at Galion reveals the ways teachers build this new kind of cooperative classroom culture. The following observation was recorded by one university researcher who spent a day with the Dream Catchers team.

A Day in the Life of the Dream Catcher Team

I arrive at 9:30 [a.m.] to observe a reading class. When I enter, the teacher approaches and welcomes me, offering, "It's Friday and two days past our school-wide convention. They are raring to go!" The students have just completed a comprehensive, building-wide interdisciplinary unit on the political process, which culminated in a two-day convention, complete with speeches, banners, confetti and cheering crowds. They experience a near facsimile of a political convention, with all the energy and excitement of such an event.

The room has retrofitted windows with panels inserted above, reducing the size of the original glass panes. These panels are covered with a variety of posters, including pictures of celebrities, cartoon characters, famous places, etc. The carpet is worn. The walls are chipped. There are old forced-air radiators along the wall under the windows. Wooden book shelves line a portion of the back wall. There is a television in the room. A Dream Catcher hangs in one corner.

Each of the walls between the rooms have been removed, replaced by moveable partitions, creating an instructional pod area. This makes movement between the rooms possible without students going into the main hallways.

The students attend science on another floor of the building. The remainder of their core classes are taught in these four pod rooms, and the students circulate around the pod as five separate classes within this eighth-grade team. Each class period is 42 minutes long. In all four rooms there is noticeable background noise from the other three. The students and teachers do not seem distracted by this. Only when one class receives a pizza party as a reward for independent silent reading do the students in the classroom linked across the open space take note of the activity, make comment, and/or move to or lean in a direction to see what is happening in the neighboring classroom. As the classes circulate around the four rooms, they are expected to sit down and read from their independent reading books at the beginning of each class, until everyone is settled and ready to work. If every member of the class follows this reading rule and reads consistently for 10 days in a row, they earn a pizza party for their independent reading efforts in that class.

Students are preparing to take a spelling test. The 28 students sit in pairs at two-person tables. The teacher gives them five minutes to study their words with a partner. She sets a timer, and when it rings, they put away their notes and take the test. Following completion

of the test, the teacher reminds eight students, whose names she calls, that their spelling sentences are due. She also reminds the class about extra-credit book forms. She then asks if they have something they would like to discuss for the remainder of the period. For these five to 10 minutes, they first discuss the Cleveland Indian's performance in the most recent World Series game and then a book one of the students is reading for his independent reading time.

The class then moves on to math. In this classroom, the two-person tables are attached in u-shaped configurations to create groups of six students each. The math teacher reminds them that all their past-due work is due at the end of class. She introduces today's lesson as involving polygons and directs them to take out their notes. She teaches from a hand-printed transparency on an overhead projector, and the students listen to the teacher's explanation and each other's comments, respond to teacher questions, [and] copy the notes and diagrams presented on the transparency into their notebooks. At one point in the lesson, during the teacher's comparison between regular and irregular polygons, she says, "This is something we covered when we did our group problem-solving activity." Later the teacher explains that she groups the students regularly into teams, within which they work through problem-solving activities using manipulative materials such as math tiles.

All students, with the exception of one, are taking notes. This is the same student who , in reading, failed to complete his spelling test because his pencil ran out of lead. Later the teacher tells me that this is a student who is cooperative and respectful but who works very slowly, regardless of the content area or the activity, that he has a difficult time grasping concepts, and that the team is working to arrange for additional supportive interventions for him. Sixth period is next. This is flex time. Some of the students have special classes they attend.

Flex time is a period which is used by teachers to assist students with their studies or projects. Students may also use this time to work together with other students on class material or to speak with staff if they are having problems with their studies or another student. It is viewed as an intervention time for teachers to address the various needs of their students.

The remaining students watch Channel One and the math teacher and I speak in the office for several moments. I ask her how teaming has changed her teaching over the past five years and how student learning has been affected. She says the interdisciplinary units encourage cross-disciplinary activities. Spelling units contain geometry words. In English they write about math as a color. She feels she structures many more group activities. In addition, she feels the flexibility in the schedule allows the four teachers to respond more readily to individual student needs. "If I need to keep a group of students for two periods because they just aren't getting something or to take them to the library, I can do that."

I ask Jane about student identification with their team and with their class group. She says she thinks that it was some of both. They try to do at least several team-wide, team-building activities each year, and they want to add to these opportunities.

"They do first feel connected as classes, I think. After all, they spend all day, every day, together. Encore classes split them into different configurations, and that puts them in regular contact across class groupings. I would advocate two-year houses, but not all teachers agree. The Fighting Falcons is a three-year team, including [advanced] sixth graders. I believe that continuity across two years is valuable. Some teachers shy away from learning two years of content, some resist the scheduling complexities that come with this kind of grouping, and some simply don't want to prepare an entire year of new lesson plans. I think the benefits would more than justify the investment."

The teacher explains that classes are heterogeneously grouped and that flexible scheduling allows teams to move students around if their were personality clashes, etc.

Next I have lunch in the teachers room and learn about "Freaky Food Friday." About five years ago, one teacher assumed responsibility for organizing and scheduling. Each Friday, a couple [of] teachers bring in food to share and spread it out in the teachers' room. One teacher present offers unsolicited comments regarding these kinds of activities. She believes they are key to keeping collaboration alive and well at Galion. She evokes the image of family. This has been a recurring theme mentioned by someone within each of my visits thus far.

"It's not only important for us as teachers. That feeling, that message gets delivered to students as well. We don't grouse about kids over lunch. Many days we talk about how to solve problems, share what works, ask each other's advice. They see us caring for each other as adults, and they see us caring for them as our students, and they learn to care for one another. It's infectious."

Today the conversation over lunch is about one teacher's son's wedding, the upcoming wedding of another teacher's son, and the illness and hospitalization of a third teacher's father-in-law. There is laughter and ribbing and, in the case of the latter, the offer of support. "You let us know if there is anything we can do."

English class follows lunch. Steven [a student], who sits at the table in front of me, offers, "English rocks. It's my favorite subject." All three of the teachers I have observed today refer to the students as "Ladies and Gentleman." The class has written their first drafts of an essay on a person they admire. Today they are challenged to revise the introduction. Beth, the teacher, begins by playing a tape of one of the morning student's revised introduction. She provides a t-chart and describes its purpose as a brainstorming tool. At the top is space to craft a simile: _____ is like a _____. Down the left side, there is space to list from

their first draft the qualities used to describe their person. Then they are to think about a nonhuman object of comparison that would embody these qualities. Lastly, they are to describe these qualities again, now in relation to the chosen object of comparison. The bottom of the chart provides space to develop these into a paragraph.

After listening to the tape, they talk through the example. The teacher has a transparency containing the same t-chart and fills in as the students analyze the introduction together. Every student, without exception, is watching and listening. At least half contribute. The taped essay compares the author's mother to a volcano. The original essay describes the mother as sometimes being quick to anger and yet often calm, as beautiful but sometimes frightening, as being a leader of the family. In playing out the metaphor, the students come up with words and phrases like "explodes," "peaceful when dormant," "beautiful and calm like the sun setting on a horizon after an eruption." The class pulls these out from the prose, and the teacher writes them on the transparency. After they work through this one together, each student tries such a revision on his/her own essay. The teacher's voice is engaging. She varies its volume. She asks them to close their eyes and imagine. She reads another student's essay in a respectful and serious tone.

"This is important writing. You can notice how much thought went into these creative introductions. When all is said and done, it will be your decision to make. I will tell you what I think, but you will choose which you like best, the original or the new paragraph. Try one yourselves now. You can talk with each other, but the talk must be in a whisper and must be about the work." One student helping another gets a little loud and the teacher says her name once quietly. She apologizes and regulates her voice. There is a folder on the side of a cabinet at the front of the room. It has the class period designated. With a reminder from the teacher, they put their first drafts along with their revised introductions in the folder as they leave the room.

The last class is social studies, and there is a substitute teacher. They are assigned a chronology of the events leading up to and including the two days of school-wide convention. They are to work on this for this period and through [the] team-based period. They have "Convention Booklets" which they work in. As they work, I ask several students questions about the convention and the subsequent election. These students know the answers to the questions I pose about process, the order in which activities took place, their purpose and about the next steps.

Announcements are conducted by the principal over the intercom at the end of the period, and the bell dismisses.

There is an energy and excitement between and among these young people on the Dream Catchers Team. On this particular day, some of the energy results from the activities of the prior day's political convention. Yet, much of the energy stems from the facts of these middle school students' lives. These young people have places to go. They have lives to live and they hurry to do it all. The Dream Catcher teachers seem to appreciate these facts, and rather than railing against them, they provide opportunities for their students to experience life in school, as well as out. One need only remember the rationale for the team's name, "helping students focus on their dreams, dreams being their goals." They pair and group their students, valuing the exchange of young ideas. They pose questions of their students and listen with genuine interest to their answers. In large part, the work they plan is important and they tell their students so.

Students are most of the people who live in schools. They are the reason everyone else comes. They move through school already endowed with wide-ranging interests and abilities. The Dream Catcher teachers plan activities which seem to be equally varied and wide ranging. An observer experiences the vitality and the confusion, the spirit of school as place, the speed of time, and the hubbub of energy. This kind of classroom culture not only allows time and space for the energy, but also encourages it — all in the name of student learning.

Growing as Learners

Within their instructional teams, teachers promote a "can-do" attitude. They share this optimism with the students, encouraging them to challenge themselves and each other.

> *We have quite a bit of public housing in the Galion area, and the parental involvement, support, and guidance, at times, is not there. I'm a firm believer that if you put any kid in the right environment, they will be successful. I see kids leave here at 2:30 [p.m.]. They are pretty much left to fend on their own and unless you have a real strong kid they are going to do what they can get away with. We have structure here, and we also give kids some freedom, and with freedom comes responsibility. We handle it well overall.* – Teacher

> *We have a boy in our eighth-grade class who came to us as a seventh grader. He was highly active and inappropriately so. He came to us with a probation officer. His mother had social service people in to help her learn how to parent, and there was a tutor assigned to him at home that came from Children's Services. At one team meeting last year in the fall, we had two probation officers, the lady who helped his mom, and his tutor, and a case worker, plus all his teachers here to talk about Steve. He was ornery, but as the year wore on he got a little better... [He's] still a problem, but this year he's back in our team. Now this boy has become — not perfect, but he's trying to do his work. He takes pride in finishing things.*

His patience is much improved, and he is so much improved that we as teachers who have known him the whole time, we are thrilled with this progress. His mom is happy with his progress. Had he been taken from us at the end of last year and put in a whole new group of kids with a whole new group of teachers, I know you would not have the same boy we have today. I don't know if he realizes how proud we are of him, and we've been careful not to say too much, because if he gets too much attention focused on him, he doesn't like it. He's getting along better with his classmates. He stays in his own space, and some of his progress is remarkable. This morning I watched him working in another class from my desk across the team area, and they were working on a science project. He was talking to his seatmate about the assignment, and he was just engaged in learning. Last year, he mostly engaged in bugging people by throwing things at them or whatever he could do to bother people. Now, he's actually able to work with someone and do his work, as well as listen. – Teacher

Last year I went to another school, I got into trouble and they held me back. Here at this school, Mrs. Austin, she's nice. She told me, if I do good this year in seventh-grade, that she will get me in eighth, or she felt they would give me eighth by next semester. I did everything, so far, real good this year. I got like an 88 average, and she said she'll take it one semester at a time to see how I'm doing. That's about the only good thing about this school that's happened: If you, like, get in trouble, the teachers give you a second chance. – Student

The teachers have salvaged time throughout the day's schedule to intervene with students. A 20-minute flex period builds in time for tutoring and remediation. Teachers involve themselves with students during lunch and after school. Across all these intervention times, the interactions are person to person. Often these interactions are both the means to remediation and social learning experiences valued in their own right.

In flex, there is a lot of student-to-student tutoring — kids helping each other. We have kids that help teachers, giving up their time to perform organizational tasks and things in the classroom. They just like being around the teachers. Even during lunch, if you come up here you will see that it's pretty relaxed and most of the kids are working on something. Once in a while, there will be a kid that maybe is having some trouble with his/her peers, and we will have him/her come and help, especially with math. It gives them something constructive to do, and while they are helping with that, there are other kids around that they get to be interacting with at a different level, and they get to be quite comfortable. – Teacher

In our team, we have kids that don't always do their homework... that's always a big problem. Now we keep some of the chronic ones after school, and we will all kind of try to help tutor them or encourage them. We have some kids who stay just for the company, and I know they're supposed to be leaving, but they'll stay [to] help other kids or just to be around their teachers a little bit longer with less structure. – Teacher

Galion students are provided a range of learning experiences which require ongoing interactions. Like their teachers, when the students work together in these meaningful activities, they build interest and commitments that continue, even after the activity ends.

> *We've gotten to a position where now, when the units are over, kids will still bring stuff to you that relates to the units we have already done. Maple syrup, for example... last year after we did the project, [kids] came back and wanted to buy supplies from our reading teacher, who makes the maple syrup. They wanted to tap their own trees. They're taking what they've learned in a classroom and they're going out and using that knowledge when they leave the school building. It is obvious some of those kids are kids who have never done anything before in the classroom, but all of a sudden something has clicked. When they come back and they still know what they're talking about, and they're getting involved in it, it's a good feeling.* – Teacher

> *All the students in the school got to see the platform of each of the candidates [student council elections during the political convention unit] at the same time. When we did the multicultural unit, we had all the students from our team together in the cafeteria, which has two big TVs mounted on the walls. We showed our student-created video presentations there. It's made it very nice to be able to show the same thing to selected areas of the building or the whole building at the same time. The students are really excited to share their work with all the kids in the school. Students that are not usually involved in their classwork enjoy the technology projects.* – Teacher

Students are also encouraged to build interpersonal relationships for their own sake. Developing such relationships, however, can be painful for students at this age. Galion teachers utilize classroom structures and instructional tasks as opportunities to spark such connections. In each of the classrooms, desks are arranged into clusters to encourage teamwork and discussion among students. Teachers report that at the beginning of the year, the students naturally want to talk with their friends. Soon they learn that certain kinds of talk can actually assist in getting the necessary work completed.

> *We pull kids together to collaborate with each other through our classwork. They are doing a 'famous Ohioan' project... they end up being an interviewer and an interviewee, where they have to play the role of some famous Ohioan and work with their partner to put the entire interview together. They've got to get to know each other and to know how they will respond to questioning. They learn each other's weaknesses and strengths.* – Teacher

> *The whole school participates in the Convention. The International Day is for the seventh graders, as is the science fair, but the eighth graders get a chance to observe what the kids have produced. They know that other people are going to see what they have done. With the science fair, the kids who do the science fair and participate in it leave things set up in*

the gym, and the science teachers take the kids through the displays. Even if the students didn't participate this year, they might be encouraged to think, "Well, I can do something like that next year." They can have the opportunity to also say, "Hey Joe, you did a good job," or "I like the way you did that," and they can encourage each other, too. – Teacher

The kids that do [team unit projects] — it kind of increases their sense of belonging and comfort. – Teacher

A big goal of ours is to try and get our students to work together better than... when they [first] come here. It is a tough age when they get here, and we have students who are not willing to work with anyone. I think a lot of activities require that you have someone else help you, and by the time they leave seventh-grade, I see our students able to communicate and able to work with just about anyone a lot better than when they came in here. – Teacher

Day of Creation: A School-wide Experience

One of the school-wide learning opportunities where students work with adults in a particularly extraordinary setting is called the Day of Creation. The Day of Creation allows the students to work with artists from across Ohio. All of the students are given a master list of presenters from which they make selections. From these choices, a day-long schedule is generated. Possible topics include Native American games, animal sculptures, modern dance, photography, East Indian dance, T-shirt painting, totem mobiles, process drama and poetry writing. Schedules in hand, the students begin the day with an assembly in the auditorium. The following observation was recorded by a university researcher who participated in the 1998 Day of Creation.

Upon entering the auditorium, I notice several teachers wearing festive hats and talking with students seated in the bleachers. One teacher turns to me: "They're going to be wound up. It's going to be a great day. I just love this day!" Several people are standing on the gym floor facing the students, some dressed in costumes from other countries. The principal calls the student body to order and introduces a teacher who is part of the planning committee for the day's events. The students erupt into cheers and applause. [The teacher] shares her thanks, tells them that they will have a great day, and introduces one of the artists from the group. [The artist also] shares her excitement about the day and proceeds to introduce the rest of the artists through a song.

"I need your help. Please sing the phrase 'Razzle, dazzle has just begun' after each person is introduced." Immediately the woman begins, "Here is Charles, he will share all his skills with his camera," at which the students shout, "Razzle, dazzle has just begun." During the introduction, Mr. Charles Corbett mimics taking a picture with his camera. The students laugh

and cheer for Mr. Corbett. Each of the 22 artisans are introduced in this manner. Not only are the students singing, but many of the Galion teachers can be seen singing as well.

As the students are dismissed from the opening activity, they move into the halls, making their way to their first session, with the assistance of several teachers positioned in the hallways. As I walk around the building, I note at the beginning of each session [that] teachers take attendance, introduce the presenter, and then become one of the participants. I see teachers dancing and singing, attempting to write a poem, or make a clay figurine. The presenters spend some time talking to the students about the training required and the possibilities for careers connected with various art forms. Artists answer questions from the students about the joys and challenges of their particular art form. Each artist is open and interactive. I observe children helping each other on projects and encouraging a teacher on a particular dance step. Teachers and artists stand next to students, praising their work.

At the end of the day, all students return to the gym to hear a concert by the high school jazz band and to share what they have made or experienced during the day. Each of the artists is cheered in thanks of their contribution, and students are dismissed for the day.

This day can be really confusing and chaotic, but the kids just love it, and they learn so much. – Teacher

The only thing that I wish could be changed about this day is for me to have the chance to go to each of the sessions and learn and experience all that these folks have to offer. It's such a different experience for us to work along side some of our students in such unique situations. – Teacher

This day takes so much planning and coordination among all the staff; it's a lot of work. But just look at the faces of the kids and listen to them share with their friends the experiences that they have had during the day, and it tells you that all the work was worth it. – Teacher

See my mobile — I'm going to put it in my room. This was so cool today. – Student

Rewards for Work Well Done

Galion teachers use intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in order to increase student motivation and achievement. Walking into the team areas, one sees photographs of students posted next to their completed work. Posters announce Students of the Month. Display cases exhibiting completed projects

from the current interdisciplinary unit can be seen throughout the building. Classroom observations provide opportunities to hear exchanges of encouragement from teachers and students.

> *You did such a great job on the last book you reviewed. I think you can handle this one. Give it a try. I'll be here to help if you need it.* – Teacher

> *We are so good; we really know this stuff.* – Student to student [as they give each other a high five]

The parents' group and community businesses have combined forces to provide the Tiger Card program. Students accomplishing high academic levels are issued a Tiger Card that entitles them to free or reduced-priced merchandise from area businesses. There is no limit to how often the student can use the card's discounts, so a middle school student could save mom and dad a few dollars on the family's Friday night pizza because of their hard work at school. The businesses send representatives to the award ceremony to show their support for the school and the students' accomplishments. The students present plaques of appreciation to the businesses during the ceremony, at the end of which all celebrate with cookies and juice.

Teams also structure their incentive programs.

> *The Venture Capital grant has allowed us the ability to increase our incentives for our students. It gave us the money to do that. For example, we have an All Star group in our team that includes any student who has turned in every assignment in all five academic areas for the nine weeks. If you turn everything in, then we take you out to lunch. It's given our kids something to really look forward to. They are very curious as to whether or not they've got everything in and if they're on that list. In fact, it became a real chore, because they were asking weekly.... We finally told them we'd tell them halfway through the nine weeks and at the end of the nine weeks.* – Teacher

> *Every year, I've submitted requisitions for funds from the Venture Capital Grants to get the things that are in my cupboard up there. The very last section on the middle shelf contains rewards that the kids can get for doing well. They earn little coupons in my class for a job well done, whether it's a bonus question or doing well on a test, or if I just have a surprise homework check. It can be [for] a lot of different reasons that they would earn one. There are different prices listed on the items up there so they are saving. I've really seen a turnaround with the new students. The older students are used to this, but the new students are like, "Oh, wow! You mean if I get so many I can get something up there?" It has worked.* – Teacher

Student Discipline

Those concerned with life in schools have long considered the problems which result when learning conflicts with order. Learning is by nature an unsettling experience. Because it is dynamic, with large numbers of students learning together in one place, order becomes an important concern for the adults in schools. Their concern extends beyond a handful, or even a roomful, of recalcitrant students who might rather be somewhere else. Even students who come willingly and happily present their own set of challenges.

Student discipline is an area of concern documented in Galion's Venture Capital Grant. Galion Middle School has achieved its stated goal of a five percent reduction in discipline referrals each year, for the life of the grant. The data collected by the school show that in 1993-94, there were 2,803 incidents of misbehavior, whereas in 1997-98, 1,440 incidents were documented. Suspensions in 1993-94 numbered 70, escalating to 156 in 1996-97, and then were reduced to 109 in 1997-98. There was one expulsion reported in 1993-94, with the highest level of nine in 1996-97 and falling back to one suspension in 1997-98.

> *Our numbers associated with discipline are way too high. We have a frequent-flyer crowd that continues to come through this office time after time. We need to address the issue in the classroom — become more consistent in what we are doing.* – Administrator

Through the Discipline Committee, a monitoring system was developed to assist teachers with misbehavior in the classroom. The step system provides progressive interventions that the teacher employs: detention, conference with the guidance counselor, teacher call to the child's parents, parent conference with the child, or referral to the office. The system, though not unique, is an attempt by the building faculty and staff to provide consistent responses to students' behavior.

> *I think they have come up with a discipline process, and we worked on that for two or three years. I thought at first it looked like we'd end up with a stack [of stuff] an inch thick... [explaining] how this was going to work. I'm looking at that and thinking, "This is impossible. It's totally impossible." Yet, this year we've got something that's less than a quarter of an inch thick, and it looks like it's going to be a workable, viable process. We pulled out a lot of hair and, at one point in time, teachers were saying that the administration was going in a totally different direction than where we wanted to go. People were uncomfortable, but they were not terribly, violently unhappy and overly concerned. They figured this isn't right and we've got to figure out some way to work it out — and it did get worked out.* – Teacher

The discipline system was implemented during the 1997-98 school year. Staff meetings were utilized to monitor the success of the system and the reactions of the teachers and students. A sample of such a staff meeting exchange follows:

Administrator: *I'm just interested in this for my own information. We have the system where we have the behavior form this year, and a few of those have been submitted on students. I would [like to] just throw out [a] question: When do you, as a teacher, use the behavior form and when do you do the discipline referral form? I know the candy and gum — I'm in agreement with that. That's pretty much an automatic detention. What are some things that you consider using the behavior form for, and what are some of the things you're using the discipline referral form for?*

Staff Member #1: *I've been using the behavior forms for kids who are chronically interrupting or bothering other people. They are classroom management kinds of things. It seems to be working pretty well.*

Administrator: *So those inside classroom management-type things. Is that something that other people are doing, or are they not thinking about it or hoping it goes away, or what? Stephanie?*

Staff Member #2: *Well, I thought that was what we're supposed to use. Those yellow and the pink forms. I've only had a couple of kids. I had the yellow papers in my hand and I said, "This is where I am with you," and they kind of straightened up. The problem I was having with detention slips was at recess, like fighting and stuff like that; I wanted a little clarification there.*

Administrator: *And there certainly needs to be a consequence for that, at least a detention. Fighting — you know the situation we had with the two students in Todd's class today. That caused a major disruption. A minimum of a Friday school, multiple Friday schoos, or even, depending on the situation, a suspension will occur. Great; if you ever have any suggestions, let me know.*

Staff are persistent in addressing student order and discipline, because they see such issues as being important to educating children. Even students that are the recipients of multiple disciplinary actions are surprisingly positive about their teachers and their treatment at school.

Interviewer: *If you have one of those problems, what happens next? What do you do about it?*

Student #1: *It all depends on what the problem is.*

Student #2: *Yeah. If you get in a big fight or something, usually they take you up there and you talk to her [guidance counselor] about it, or if you think you're gonna get in a fight, you talk to her and she'll put you both in a room and talk to you. The principal will take care of it.*

Student #3: *Or she [guidance counselor] talks to the person and tells them about what's going on, not including yourself — just tells them somebody's planning a fight.*

Student #2: *Yeah, so you can tell her about how they're gonna fight you and somebody else tells her. She tries to keep the kid and make him understand he shouldn't fight this kid, because if something would happen to him you [he] would get suspended.*

Student #1: *You have a conference, but then if I have a problem with that, ... I go talk to the principal about it.*

Interviewer: *And what happens when you have that conversation?*

Student #1: *I'll talk to him and tell him what's going on and [ask] what are choices as punishment. It's like a contract.*

Student #3: *If he understands where you're coming from, he might give you a break.*

Interviewer: *What's the big thing that you would tell other kids about this school?*

Student #1: *I think it's a good school. We have a lot of good teachers and stuff like that.*

Parent-Teacher-Student Relationships

Fostering connections with parents and the community continues to be a priority for this school. Parents continue to offer input and feedback instrumental to Galion's reform efforts.

All of our committees represent everybody: there's a parent, some [committees] don't have students and some do, businesses are represented. I think every stakeholder is represented on a lot of our committees. I think we do ask their opinions. – Teacher

Our Parents as Partners Program included business partners along with some parents, and we asked them for a list of 50 ways that they thought we could help our school. It was kind of interesting. Forty of those 50 we are already doing, but [many people] just didn't know it. It made us aware that we needed to get the communication out there. In one way, it made us aware that we had to further our communication. – Teacher

The involvement of parents and community members has been varied, but the focus continues to be to provide support for greater student achievement.

I think the community has been an important part of our success at the middle school. They've been very supportive of our building and our programs, especially financially, in a lot

of ways, with the things they've donated to the school. I think that all fits with educating the total student. You've got to have a balance of all those things to really be at your best in teaching these kids. – Teacher

We do have an active parents group, and many of those parents sit in on some of our committee meetings, so they do have a chance to know at least what's going on and voice their opinions. – Teacher

The teachers recognize the strongest connection that they have with the parent is the child. The message that their child brings home each day will have the greatest influence on how parents perceive the school, and ultimately how they talk about the school within the community setting.

Our students are big ambassadors for the school, and the parents can be advocates, but the kids are the link. – Teacher

The Ohio Association of Elementary School Administrators sent a team to interview us, and they spent the day on-site. They interviewed parents, teachers, made phone calls — and the interesting thing is they asked me to give them a list of all the parents we've taken to court over discipline problems... I think they contacted 10 or 12 parents we've taken to court. Most of the parents they talked to were families we took to court because of non-compliance of school rules, unruly or truancy. The parents thought we were very fair and had the best interest of the kids at heart, and I think that did more for us than anything. – Administrator

Parents have also been a blanket that have helped to wrap and protect the middle school. If you were to go in and try to go backwards in this process and go back to a traditional junior high, the staff would rebel first, along with the administration. The parents would also revolt, because I really think they believe in what we're doing. I know during our levy, when we were talking to people about what would happen if we didn't pass the levy, a lot of the conversation revolved around, "Well, they better not touch the middle school." – Teacher

Questions still remain regarding expanded roles for parents and community members in the continued development of the middle school. Accessing the talents of adults within the community and strengthening the bonds in the teacher-student-parent relationship remain challenges.

I think... parental involvement is an area where we fall short. We've done a good job of drumming up support in terms of community resources. People have been willing to help by buying calculators for our students to use. But in terms of true community involvement, we are on the weak side. Some of the teams have done a better job than others in getting community and parents directly involved in their units of instruction and in their teams. – Teacher

Communities are familiar with their schools, as well they should be. The adult members of a community feel responsible for protecting and guiding their children. They wish to shield them from negative influences. Children live in schools much of their time, and parents are free to look inside. Many have opinions about what they see. Some think they know how to do things better or smarter or more efficiently.

As Galion teachers and administrators continue to reconceive the school's culture on behalf of their students, they must find ways to initiate more dialogue with parents, engaging them in conversations about the changes they make and the rationale behind them. Just as teachers' and students' attitudes about school are affected by these collective experiences, so too will parents begin to view school differently as they understand the significance of the changes in their children's school lives.

Changing student culture within classrooms in order to foster productive relationships and channel adolescent energies requires corresponding energy and ingenuity on the part of teachers. This they seek from one another, from the collective wisdom of the teaching teams and the school faculty, and, where possible, from outside sources. Considering that the multiple dimensions of these cultural changes are organizational, developmental, political, we can see that the amount of energy necessary to sustain continuing progress on all fronts is substantial.

Chapter Four

Middle School Community at Large: Extending a New School Culture Beyond the Four Walls

Public schools are interdependent on their community environments. From the individual school building, up through the various levels of school district structure, out into the local community and beyond to the state and the nation, schools and their communities have certain expectations of each other. Communities entrust schools with their future. Schools entrust communities with theirs. In this sense, distinguishing "between school and not school" becomes difficult, if not impossible (Waller, 1965, p. 6).

At times, the community environment only increases the demands of daily life at the middle school. Other times, it offers new insights and supports.

Environmental Supports

The teachers and administrators at Galion Middle School have long realized the importance of establishing and maintaining professional connections with universities and other middle schools. Teachers are encouraged to share new information and experiences. The staff has a continuing history of utilizing various outside sources to gain knowledge and skills. These sources include businesses, universities and other schools.

> *We had quality team training through United Sprint. This helped provide us with some training on how to communicate and to assess our needs.* – Teacher

> *When Dr. Stevens got involved, he came over and provided in-service. We began to associate ourselves with Ashland University and the Small School Network. We began to do some networking and taught each other what we knew about teaching and about schooling.* – Teacher

Throughout that period in the 1980s, Ashland University was heavily involved with effective instruction, teaming, and collaboration. We developed a new Small Schools Network. The original smaller schools network was just four schools. We did a little grant writing, held a couple of meetings a year and talked about some middle school issues. It wasn't until 1995, when Dr. Komer at Ashland University developed a new Small Schools Network, [that] we had anywhere from 10 to 14 schools. We did a little bit better job of meeting regularly, looking at issues, and taking responsibility for providing in-service for each other. It continues to be a support source to us today. – Administrator

Environmental Constraints

Economic conditions within the Galion community at large have affected the middle school. A steady decline in local business and industry has many families struggling. This lack of economic security adds stress to the lives of the middle school students. While parents struggle to find and keep jobs, yet another major manufacturing employer announced the immediate closure of their Galion plant this past year. Community leaders felt that they had been betrayed. Tax abatements became bad investments as the employer refused to uphold its agreement with the city.

It would be great if we didn't have to worry about the financial end of things, but that's a problem every school district has. It would be nice if so many of these kids didn't come to school with so much baggage, but there are so many needs that need to be met. With some of our parents being concerned about providing for their children, it is a growing problem. It seems that the schools take on more and more responsibilities all the time, and all those things take more time and take more money. Schools oftentimes want to do more, because the ultimate goal is to be successful in educating our children, and that incorporates a lot of different realms. [Some say] legislators at the state level need to somehow resolve all these problems. With a magic wand? I guess we're never going to live in an ideal society where all these [problems are resolved]. – Teacher

Teachers accept responsibility for developing basic work skills within their students. Many middle school teachers reside within Galion. They recognize, firsthand, the need for developing an effective work force in order to guarantee the city's future. It is a tall order.

Prints and Paints [a local business] was run by four young people. Three went through Galion City schools. I stopped by yesterday to see how they were doing. They were tearing down a building and expanding. The father always was involved with the schools in the school board capacity, coming in as a speaker. It's interesting to see the motivation and the teamwork that they have. There's a pulse to that place. I said, "You know, this is just fantastic. You work together." They're involved in expanding and want to stay here. I was driving home

last night and thought, "Darn, if we could just get a few more motivated young people who want to stay in the community to build, it would be wonderful." We have many students who work hours of community service. We recognize them at the end of the year. I think that is a transfer and a reflection of things that come from the school. – Teacher

As the middle school addresses the daily challenges associated with these local community concerns, the school would benefit from a district-wide focus on common mission. However, evidence of middle school efforts being connected to or replicated in the other Galion schools is limited. In fact, the middle school's reform efforts seem to have set them apart from other schools in the district. This is due in part to jealousy from without, and in part to Galion Middle Schools own tendency to focus internally. Teachers and administrators recognize a need to open avenues for communication in order to improve curricular alignment and extend integration across school levels.

The quote was, "Sometimes in a district, what you have are a lot of little kingdoms united by a common parking lot." In a district, you have a lot of little kingdoms united by a common central administration, so we have to say, "Okay, we've got one big kingdom guided by central administration." We're still little kingdoms, and we haven't pulled it all together and said, "Okay, now let's attack it together. There's more power in numbers." – Teacher

We need to do more of that. The high school teacher and I had mentioned [that] in order for the students to improve, there has to be some more communication between elementary, middle school, [and] high school. But for some reason, there's always been walls put up. – Teacher

A step was taken this year, when members of the middle school staff were invited to work with one of the elementary schools in formulating a Venture Capital grant. The opportunity not only provided new conversations but resulted in a successful application.

I think it's really important. I was on a committee last year where we wrote a Venture Capital grant for the elementary to do curriculum mapping. This would help us up here. We helped them get it started, but then it would all work together and help us, as well. I don't think we do enough of that, and I think it's something that really needs to be done so that we know where students are when they come to us. – Teacher

As the middle school staff began to make structural changes, pursue instructional adaptations, and push each other in conversations about their profession, the staff members found themselves bumping up against teacher association structures and policies, as well as specific contractual agreements. School-district-level policies and arrangements threatened the middle school's progress.

When we were ready to go into teaming and change our schedules and work structures, we had to have permission from our union. Our union felt a little bit uncomfortable with what

we were doing, but our staff was so united in what we were doing that it almost broke our union. Our union has almost 99.9 percent membership. Our union traditionally has always had a pretty good working relationship with our management. Some of the issues of the master scheduling and common team time — some people in the district, at the elementary and high school, viewed this as our teachers having extra counseling time. There were some people who voiced some concern and actually launched some formal complaints and considered [filing] some grievances. Our executive board and union got together with some of our key leaders in our middle school. They told the union that this is what we want, and they told the union to back off. They actually told the union in so many words that if they didn't,... the momentum at the middle school was strong enough that people would jump ship. The issue was dropped and has never reappeared since then. – Administrator

As local community and school district concerns continue to challenge Galion Middle School, state-level decisions such as the performance standards for the state proficiency tests, also affect the direction of future school reform. Teachers and administrators at Galion express frustration regarding the standards and methods by which their students are judged. They see Galion students at a disadvantage compared with students who attend wealthier suburban school districts. Galion is a community struggling economically. The physical structure of the school shows its age, and technology is introduced slowly, again as a result of teacher energy and initiative. Teachers talk about doing the best they can with what they have and yet question whether this will ever be good enough, given the standards by which their students are judged.

Unfortunately, one of the things we really have to keep an eye on here is our proficiency scores. They are not the greatest in the world. We can say, "Galion Middle School is a great place to be," and sometimes you can't measure that with tangible things because they're intangible. The proficiency scores are tangible, and I think our teachers do recognize that, especially with the indicators from the school's grade card (Senate Bill 55). There are 18 of them, and 16 of them are directly tied to the proficiency results. I hate seeing our school district put in the academic emergency category because of our proficiency scores. – Administrator

When we got down to it, we had almost 60 percent of the students that passed all but two of the subtests on the proficiency. But because we haven't looked at the data, we do not know if we are making progress — if we are getting closer. How many of our kids are one or two questions away from passing? When I looked through the Citizenship subtest results, a lot of kids are just a few questions away from passing. We haven't gotten to the data because of communication between teams. We are all aware of the performance indicators that Senate Bill 55 has established. – Teacher

> *I can't stress enough that I am a real proponent of what we've done in this school, and I know those doggone proficiency test scores aren't going to zoom up there because of it. Don't ask me why. But I am convinced that we are on the right track here. We're just not very far down the road, right now; we're still in the infant stage.* – Teacher

The stark realities of the test score data, coupled with a collective sentiment on the part of Galion Middle School teachers regarding the work still to be accomplished, draw administrators and teachers back to the table to draft the next steps. They recognize that they must begin to target individual classrooms and specific instructional strategies. They must begin to connect what teachers experience together in the school corridors — how they talk and work and decide — with what they actually do in the classroom as individual teachers.

Chapter Five

Middle School Teacher Practice: Connecting Reforms in the Corridors with Practices in the Classrooms

Galion Middle School is a culture in transition. The teachers and administrators of this school have reconceived the way they structure time, group students, make decisions, and accomplish their work each day. They have changed administrator, teacher and student norms in order to make school experiences more cooperative, more vital, and more continuous with middle school students' lives. Instructional teams are central to these reforms. The teams foster professional relationships between teachers, productive collegiate and social relationships between students, mutually invigorating relationships between teachers and their students, and a more reciprocal relationship between the school and its parent community.

These changes have resulted from careful consideration of who middle school students are and what will best help them learn and grow. These middle school teachers have also reaped the benefits of this thoughtful inquiry. In changing institutional arrangements for their students, they have created opportunities for themselves. Learning and growing together as professionals, they have summoned the collective wherewithal to challenge their assumptions even further. From their strengthened position in the corridors, they are now ready to turn their attention to individual classrooms and individual teacher practices.

Tweaking and Trickle Down

The teacher and administrative leadership at Galion Middle School has demonstrated an understanding that significant change takes time. Such sustained change efforts combine energies that extend over a long period, with particular actions that are timely — coming just as the need arises. Such "just-in-time interventions" at Galion include trainings, structural modifications, or deliberate airing of concerns or suggestions at a team or 20/20 meeting. While the educational literature continues to expand the estimates of time for true reform, Galion teachers and administrators appear to have always appre-

ciated this fact. As chronicled here, the staff took the time to know each other, initiated teaming and scheduling adjustments gradually, and valued the step-by-step development of teachers, always supporting their individual as well as collective growth.

While changing school cultures demands considerable energy over an extended period, the time may be well spent. Participants may discover that in learning how to team and how to solve problems collectively, they have also gained the courage and the skills to scrutinize individual teacher practice. This stage of inquiry will require that they continue challenging their assumptions about school and school work.

> *Most schools and the teachers within these schools have a pedagogical past encompassing habits, traditions, norms so deeply ingrained that they are rarely discussed and examined. Such taken-for-granted practices only become part of the discourse when circumstances or conditions alter (e.g., new policy, hirings). While they may seem like routines, rules, codes, they are also part of a legacy of previous change (some of today's routines were yesterday's reforms). Furthermore, they are often cornerstones to what make each school distinct and effective. In any further change efforts, schools then have to struggle with the extent to which they should preserve, revise or dismantle these qualities which have contributed to their success.* (Thiessen & Anderson, 1998, p.7)

This next stage will be difficult, because the work here grows more personal. The focus turns from school-wide and team-wide concerns to individual classroom and individual teacher concerns. Still, Galion teachers have already learned to listen, watch and incorporate new ideas across teams. In a similar fashion, teachers can now use their individual classrooms as sites for experimentation and feedback, engaging in critical dialogue about what will be possible from this point forward.

The framework here applied to the Galion Middle School story considers changes as initiated in the classroom, in the corridors and in the community. As we investigate change in this manner, we are able to appreciate accomplishments as well as understand remaining challenges. Comparing progress across the three contexts suggests ways change at one location encourages further change at another. In the classroom, we observe teachers learning and adapting new practices, primarily on an individual basis. The strength of their connections with fellow team members supports informal peer observations. Routine walkabouts within the team areas encourage natural incidences of professional learning.

In the corridors, the true fruits of the school's labors can be documented. The creation of time and space for teachers to work together through team time provides the vehicle for collaboration. Products such as team units and interdisciplinary studies have resulted. Evidence of increased teacher efficacy is apparent as participants have voice and choice in decisions having the greatest impact on their day-to-day work. These opportunities are common within their teams and school committees. Finally, teachers assume effective leadership roles, as team leaders, developing significant potential for teacher leadership.

The middle school has extended a hand to groups and individuals who can assist in their endeavors. In the community, the school has participated in networks sharing ideas and concerns with other schools and with groups from higher education. The school has sought and utilized outside resources, supporting trainings, conferences and workshops. The structures and processes implemented by Galion Middle School over the past decade or more will provide a strong foundation as educators continue dialogue about what is best for children and how they might improve their standing as educational professionals.

> *When we came up with those central issues, those things that were central to kids and how they learn, that's when we made progress. We sat down as a whole group and said, "Hey, guys, this is our ship, right here. How are we going to get it to shore?" We disagreed on the little things, but on the big ones, pretty much everybody agreed. That's where our ownership came from.* – Teacher

Over time, teaming in the corridors has enabled teachers to teach differently within their individual classrooms. Learning to plan and implement interdisciplinary units, constructing more cooperative learning experiences, relating to students in more authentic ways — all this has brought them to the brink of potentially bold changes in classroom practice. Data regarding student behavior and achievement further justify these next steps.

Considering Data Indicators

In developing their Venture Capital grant, Galion Middle School noted several indicators it proposed to monitor as measures of progress. The school projected the level of improvement that it hoped to achieve.

Achievement by the ninth-grade classes on the proficiency test has been disappointing. During the past five years, passage rate on all five tests has been sporadic, with the lowest level being 29 percent and the current level at 43 percent. The highest performance level during this time period was 48 percent. The achievement by the sixth-grade classes on the proficiency test over the past three years also indicates need for improvement. Passage on all five tests across the five elementary buildings at the sixth-grade ranges from six percent to 28 percent for 1997-98. The challenge for the middle school staff continues to be increasing student performance, that is, reducing the gap between performance levels as they enter the middle school and expected performance on the ninth-grade test. The staff is beginning to utilize the performance rates on the eighth-grade spring pre-proficiency tests as a means to analyze curriculum and align team planning with courses of study in the various content areas.

The school also selected three components of student discipline to monitor behavior incidents, suspensions, and expulsions. During the past five years, the behavioral incidents have reduced from 2,616

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in 1993-94 to 1,440 in 1997-98. Suspensions and expulsions have continued to fluctuate. In 1993-94, there were 70 suspensions and one expulsion. Both escalated over the next few years, reaching the highest rate in 1996-97 with 156 suspensions and nine expulsions. The figures for 1997-98 reveal 109 suspensions and one expulsion. The attendance rate at the middle school has been stable over the past five years at a rate of 94 percent.

The failure rate, defined as number of students with at least one F, mirrors the up-and-down pattern of the discipline indicators. The failure rate in 1993-94 was at 21.6 percent, with the highest level occurring in 1996-97 at 24.7 percent. During 1997-98, 19.2 percent of the students received an F. Retentions during these years averaged two a year.

During the past year, teachers have begun to address pedagogical concerns. Many people can list changes in their teaching as being more interactive, personal, inclusive, thematic and authentic. Though there is conversation about student achievement being the cornerstone of the all reform efforts, changes seem to happen in classrooms indirectly or as a consequence of combined actions by the team. The staff realizes that its agenda must include reforming individual teacher practice. Observations by the university researcher within some classrooms reveal continued reliance on teacher-centered modes of instruction, as noted in this morning visit with one of the teams.

Mathematics, 8:00 a.m.

Homework summary logs for all classes are posted on wall. A woman is seated at a table taking note —, possibly the learning disabilities tutor, [who] often pointed out things to two students on either side of her. Students copied "notes" from board, four problems and homework assignment for tomorrow. Time was given by the teacher to copy the problems. She told the class to get out a clean sheet of paper and asked them to "set it up." She had examples of how to set up worksheets on [the] blackboard. "You know you can move around to see the board if you need to." The teacher walked around [the] room to see that everyone was ready to complete the homework. Students got out their homework, exchanged, and checked correct layout. If there was an error, the student checking merely corrected it. Several procedures were evident in class flow: opening, grading, transitions. Students were seated in table clusters of five to six students. "Remember, you get extra credit if I see that you wrote down the examples when I collect your journal sheets at the end of the day."

There are many single student responses to questions, leaving many students being semi-engaged (doing other things while listening to discussion).

Reading, 8:45 a.m.

"If you are talking, it is an automatic zero," announced the teacher as the students walk into the room. The learning disabilities tutor did not follow students to this class. A question — "What volunteer work have you done lately?" — was written on the chalkboard. Students

sat quietly waiting for [the] teacher to come in. Most had literature books open and were reading. Teacher took visual attendance while they read. Student book reports are posted. "How many of you studied for this quiz today?" No one raised their hand. Teacher spoke to their responsibility to get good grades. "It takes work."

Quiz questions were distributed to the students; they proceeded to complete the quiz. "You have 25 minutes. When you are done, you can use the time today to study for your social studies quiz, but there is no talking. Someone got caught in the other class, and you know what happens. If you are talking, it is an automatic zero. This quiz is worth 60 points."

Social Studies, 9:30 a.m.

Teacher gave directions for test taking, announced items for convention unit, and then distributed tests. "Put tests in [the] third tray to the left of my desk when you are done." The test was fill-in the blank with a word bank provided, 17 words and 19 questions. The teacher told the class where to look for the answers to questions that were not included in the word bank. A child got to the last question which asked for an acronym. "You sure you can't think of any?" And the student replied, "No," turning in his test.

Most students finished within 10 minutes. When done with the test, most students read their reading literature books, looked at homework organizers, or drew.

Language Arts, Student Teacher, 10:15 a.m.

Students were much more animated — talking with friends, walking around [the] room, talking out. The teacher distributed graded papers. Students talked with each other. Students argued with the student teacher regarding grades — why their particular answer was wrong. Students talked among themselves on nonrelated concerns.

"Tomorrow, we will be changing some seats, because there is too much talking going on," the teacher shared. They continued talking, walking to [the] pencil sharpener and wastebasket. The teacher directed a child to a seat and reminded them to be quiet. The child argued. The teacher argued back. Once the class started, students were asked to read orally. For the most part, they settled down, though four boys continued to talk and pass notes. "OK, where were we?" the teacher comments. "Wake up and join us, Frank."

Though such traditional classroom interactions are not uncommon in American middle schools today, the Galion Middle School faculty recognize that changing these habits within their own classrooms requires that they initiate direct discussions about instructional methodology. The structures are in place. Trust is strong among team members. Scheduling allows for collaboration. Teachers feel comfortable observing each other's classes. The circumstances are right to address these teaching and learning dynamics, which are the core of educational practice.

I think what we've done is change the packaging of education that we offer. We've streamlined it; we've modernized it. Now what we want to do is get at the contents, to make them fit that packaging even better — to use the unique packaging we have come up with to its utmost and not have any open spaces; not to have waste. I think our teaming and scheduling has created a situation where we can make the next step. Now we have to use it and make that next step. – Teacher

I think we've broken down the barriers in terms of trying to stick a bunch of stuff into a small amount of time. What I see is more of an investment on the teachers' part to come out of their particular realm. I think they feel comfortable in a teaching style, or in operating their particular classroom. We are going more and more out of the regular block of time for science, and I am now working with students in a much more integrated fashion. They now see me as a teacher that is really interested in working with them on what is important for a total product or project. – Teacher

I've seen the most significant changes in the people in our teams going from their normal everyday teaching mode to a more integrated, well-rounded approach. They're now beginning to give their content expertise plus help students write their ideas down, speak their mind and present their ideas.– Teacher

There are teachers working together, and they are genuinely excited about what is going on in the classroom. They're moving in and out of groups of students, and they're guiding them not only in the areas of their subject matter but [in] their entire approach to the instructional unit. Our kids get pumped up because their teachers are pumped up. Just this afternoon, four teachers were team-teaching a unit. There they were with a group of about 75 students working on these projects. The students had absolutely no idea whose class they were in. ...They were doing those things necessary to do the best they could do at approaching that particular group task. – Teacher

Next Steps: To Advance Pedagogical Reforms in the Classroom

Important intermediate factors are a strong professional community and ongoing collaborative activities in linking changes in school structure to changes in classroom practice. Often, however, "having been enculturated into the norm of respect for individuality, autonomy, and noninterference, and without the experience of negotiating differences, teachers ignore larger questions about practice in spite of the opportunity created by group collaboration" (Evans-Stout, 1998, p. 130).

I think one of the limits we've set — it's not been a verbal agreement but it's sort of a quiet agreement — is I don't think we collaborate so much on teaching styles as maybe we possibly could. For example, I don't talk to Cindy; Cindy doesn't talk to Cherri, in terms of how to present the subject. I think we've pretty much said, "Hey, the way people approach things is pretty much hands-off." For example, you might have those teachers that are highly energetic, sort of your entertainer type of thing, and you might have those teachers that are totally hands-on, and you might have those teachers that are the traditional stand-up-and-talk and I'm-the-boss type of person. I think we've said we can pretty much live with those different styles. But let's not try to collaborate to change those, because we don't want to mess with people's own personal touch. – Teacher

Even within the strongest teams at Galion, teachers recognize that these professional habits are hard to break. Some things still remain "off limits." At the same time, they recognize that these are the very limits they must cross in order to bring recent reforms to bear on the "core of educational practice" (Elmore, 1995, p. 23). They talk about a need to push themselves to this deeper level of questioning and challenging their own and each other's individual classroom and instructional norms and practices. Many faculty members sense they face another crossroads.

We're not content. We have a feeling that we are good, but we're not content to stay there; we want to be even better. That is why the next step is tentative, because it's going to be a big one. – Teacher

We've got some challenges we're going to face. These are the real challenges! We've done a really good job, in terms of philosophy, approach, structure and change. – Teacher

We are still struggling with the job we think we are doing and the poor proficiency scores. We think we're doing a pretty good job, but we still have that big gap between what's supposed to happen and what's happening. – Teacher

This next stage of reforms can be grounded in successful current practices. Still, research would suggest that such a positive evolution is not guaranteed. "Structure matters. It presents opportunities for and impediments to teaching and learning. At the same time, the literature suggests that changing structures is not synonymous with changing the beliefs, habits, knowledge, and skills that undergird teachers instructional practice" (Fullan, 1995; Richardson, 1990). This is where the critical inquiry can grow personally threatening. Analyzing individual teachers' instructional practices will require a new level of openness. Teachers face this challenge understanding it will not come easily.

We're at our next step. We have created the structural changes, or the packaging. Now we need to use it effectively. We need to make the substantive changes. We want to go beyond looking at English and science and social studies; we want to integrate them to make a holistic view. – Teacher

A Changing School Culture: The Case Study of Galion Middle School

Setting a school's future course is daunting a task. Choosing to take steps that will knowingly create tensions and challenges can be disconcerting, especially when the staff is enjoying accolades for the job they are currently doing.

> *Tension is something that comes with the territory. If you're going to be open, and you're going to be like we are at the Middle School, there is going to be tension. The important thing is how you handle that tension and if it is a positive force or a negative force. I think we've handled it very well; in a positive way, it's helped out. Teachers now are able to speak their minds. They speak their true feelings The next step for our building is one that's really causing concern — I mean we have talked about it. When we get to that point, to take the next step, it's bothering us. What do we do? We fall back on the familiar. We start worrying about, "What is it going to do to me?" which is only natural. We go beyond — that is our tradition. So we need to say, "Okay, let's get down to business and find out what's going to happen here." When you have different people at different points in their development, you're going to have tensions. New ideas create tension. Some folks are enthusiastic — they're pushing — and there are some people at a different comfort level who need to turn things down a little, to take it easy. It's times like these that tensions occur, but they can be healthy tensions as long as they create improvement and they create forward movement.* – Teacher

> *You can talk all you want about having a good school; that's what we do best here. Are there people that aren't with us on that? There sure are. Will there always be? Yes, but we have a great number of people in this building that are pulling the chain together. What we will be judged on isn't really what is happening today or tomorrow. We will be judged down the road, if reforms come and go, like every other thing. I don't think they will. I see us doing things because we believe they are the right things to do.* – Teacher

Teachers and administrators at Galion Middle School continue to challenge one another to do "the right things" on behalf of their students. They have grown collectively committed as professionals and feel ready to move forward, wrestling with ideas about how they can do these "right things" even better.

> *The challenges that we need to face are based upon the changes that we've made. We've changed some things structurally. We've changed philosophically. We've changed in ways that are going to force us into new patterns of thinking. We're going to have to really, truly get away from some of the paradigms we have. Get away from that, "Well we don't have time to do this," to, "We have to make time or find a way to do it." We're to the point now where we're on another kind of new horizon.* – Teacher

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APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

The Transforming Learning Communities project is an initiative funded by the Ohio Department of Education to support significant ongoing school reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. Education researchers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto were contracted to conduct in-depth case studies of school reform in a select number of schools that have made significant progress in school improvement efforts supported, in part, by the state's Venture Capital grants program. Twelve schools were chosen for variation in type (elementary, middle, secondary), location (rural to urban; region), focus for change (teaching and learning, professional development), school improvement model, and evidence of progress. The aim is to understand the nature and process of school improvement efforts in these schools, to explore ways to support their continued development, and to engage other educators in Ohio in the lessons learned from these schools. The case studies were carried out by the local teams, consisting of the project co-directors from the University of Toronto, at least two members of the school staff, and subcontracted researchers from Ohio university faculties of education partnered with the schools. The project began in the spring of 1997 and continued into the fall of 1998.

The Central Ohio Research Team

The Central Ohio Research Team comprised one faculty member and three graduate research assistants from the Ohio State University's College of Education, along with nine representatives across the three Central Ohio case-study schools, these being Franklin Heights High School, Galion Middle School, and Reynoldsburg High School. This cross-school team worked together to develop a case study plan with common core research questions and some degree of consistency in interview guides, standardized observation strategies and protocol, and document samples across the three schools. Instruments and field visit strategies were then tailored by the members of each individual school team in order to best capture the specific content of and process for school improvement at each of these three schools.

Members of the cross-school research team participated in one full-day and three half-day work sessions during July and August 1997. The team agreed upon a number of fundamental research questions and went on to develop interview guides for staff, parents, and students and standardized observation protocol for use at the three schools. These broad research questions and corresponding interview guides proceed from the key elements of the Transforming Learning Communities framework. They were developed around the three themes of collaboration, inquiry, and integration. Although the focus shifted from one school to the next according to the specific features of their school improve-

ment plan, school representatives were confident that close attention to the framework would support in-depth explorations of these three learning communities. The fundamental research questions were as follows:

1. *What is the nature of the learning communities at Franklin Heights, Galion and Reynoldsburg, including themes, tensions, and complexities?*
2. *Plot the critical path of change at these three schools. Place the description of each learning community in a context which acknowledges the past and anticipates the future.*
3. *What factors have affected, and continue to affect, the development of Franklin Heights, Galion, and Reynoldsburg as learning communities?*
4. *How do organizational structures and norms, socio-political conditions, and local, state, and federal policies encourage and/or impede collaboration, inquiry and integration at Franklin Heights, Galion, and Reynoldsburg?*
5. *What are the structures, strategies and support networks that have developed to encourage change?*
6. *How have these structures, strategies and support networks encouraged collaboration, inquiry and integration across classrooms, corridors and into the community?*
7. *How does each learning community assess its progress to date in relation to the goals it has established and indicators for success it has identified for improved student and teacher learning?*

Site Visits and Data Gathering

During these initial work sessions, tentative data gathering and site visit plans were developed. Plans included early introductions, document reviews, shadowings and observations, staff interviews beginning late September. These initial site visits gave each team opportunity to be seen and known before interviews begin in earnest.

From September 15 to May 30, the Ohio State University team spent one to two days each week at Galion Middle School interviewing staff, observing classes, shadowing students, and attending meetings/presentations. The core Galion research team was composed of two teachers, the building principal, an assistant principal (who assumed the role of acting principal in April 1998 when the current principal left the district), and the two Ohio State researchers. School members assumed responsibility for scheduling interviews and for making other necessary site visit arrangements. They also assisted with ongoing revisions to the research plan and various instruments and protocol.

Researchers analyzed relevant documents and archival evidence. Documents reviewed across the three school sites include: the Venture Capital Grant applications, school improvement plans, school district guidelines, building guidelines, faculty handbooks, and parent and student handbooks. In addition,

there were documents specific to Galion, including the Effective School grant, the Venture Capital budget, the school-wide discipline plan, the Ohio Association of Elementary Administrators Hall of Fame application, the Ohio Equity Grant, the Ohio Broadcasting grant, the Gathering of Holocaust Survivors grant, grade levels goals, sample interdisciplinary units, and the school flex schedule. Observations included shadowing students representative of different program areas and grade levels, attending team meetings, faculty meetings, school level leadership team meetings, and school-wide unit activities.

Key participants were identified from each of the three schools. The staff and parent guides were field-tested during August. Feedback from these field tests directed instrument revisions. The student interview guide was customized to structure questions more specific to school and program contexts using appropriate terms and titles.

Interviews with faculty, staff, district level administrators, a former principal, community representatives, students, and parents included both focus group and individual interviews. In keeping with Miles and Huberman (1994), questions were employed flexibly, serving as a guide to conversation, rather than an oral survey. Interviews lasted on average one and one half hours, occurring in classrooms, in school offices, in the teachers' lounge, and at various community sites. Approximately 34 interviews were conducted at Galion. All interviews were audiotaped.

Data Management and Analysis

Three levels of data collection and analysis occurred at each of the three Central Ohio schools, with one of the project co-directors from the University of Toronto serving as an *ex officio* team member spending approximately five days at each school, the faculty member from the Ohio State University dividing her time across the three sites, and each of the three graduate research assistants leading site contact at one school exclusively. The Ohio State University research team representatives met monthly to coordinate/compare data and ongoing interpretations. They shared field notes and interview transcripts, discussed emerging themes, and shared these with school team members as they proceeded. The project co-director met with the team in December 1997 to discuss early impressions, and provided written interpretations and suggestions in July 1998.

All audiotaped interviews were transcribed. Data were then organized, classified and coded. Initial coding was done using *a priori* codes derived from the TLC framework and from the literature on school change. Additional codes were added as they emerged (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The investigators employed a qualitative thematic strategy of data analysis, making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages, searching for emerging themes, anomalies and contradictions among the interviews with key participants and the contents of relevant documents and observations (Holsti, 1969; Merriam, 1988). Appropriate software (i.e., Hyper Research) was utilized. Potential problems of validity and reliability were addressed through triangulation of data, that is, using multiple data sources to provide multiple indicators of the same phenomenon (Denzin,

1970). In addition, member checks were conducted with key participants, asking if the data were accurate and interpretations plausible (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). School representatives to the research team participated fully in validation of research findings. Finally, rich, thick description provides a base of information appropriate to judge the transferability of the findings (Merriam, 1988).

Ethical Considerations

The research plan for the case study was reviewed and approved under standard ethical review procedures for research on human subjects at the Ohio State University. Although the 12 schools participating in the Transforming Learning Communities project will be identified, specific procedures were followed to protect the rights, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants to the highest degree possible within this context. Participation was voluntary, and individuals had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was given a description of the purposes of the study and the conditions of participation, and each signed an informed consent form. The draft report was made available to school personnel for review, providing a check on confidentiality, accuracy, and the opportunity to submit alternative interpretations of findings. All tapes, transcripts, documents, and field notes were stored securely during the study and will be destroyed after a period of time designated under the project guidelines.

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TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES SITES

GALION MIDDLE SCHOOL
Galion City Schools
The Ohio State University

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

1 **Brentmoor Elementary School**
Mentor Exempted Village Schools
Cleveland State University

2 **Cranwood Learning Academy**
Cleveland City Schools
Cleveland State University

3 **Dawson-Bryant Elementary School**
Dawson-Bryant Local Schools
(Lawrence County)
Ohio University

4 **Lomond Elementary School**
Shaker Heights City Schools
Cleveland State University

5 **Miami East North Elementary School**
Miami East Local Schools
(Miami County)
Miami University

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

6 **East Muskingum Middle School**
East Muskingum Local Schools
(Muskingum County)
Muskingum College
Ohio University

7 **Galion Middle School**
Galion City Schools
The Ohio State University

8 **Talawanda Middle School**
Talawanda City Schools
Miami University

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

9 **Federal Hocking High School**
Federal Hocking Local Schools
(Athens County)
Ohio University

10 **Franklin Heights High School**
South-Western City Schools
The Ohio State University

11 **Reynoldsburg High School**
Reynoldsburg City Schools
The Ohio State University

12 **Robert A. Taft High School**
Cincinnati City Schools
Miami University

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